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FRIENDS
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A STORY BOOK OF JESUS

John led Jesus into the water and baptized Him.

A STORY BOOK OF JESUS

BY

ENID BLYTON

Illustrated by

ELSIE WALKER

J225
B625

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FOREWORD

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THIS is a book for mothers and young children : for mothers who want to introduce the story of Jesus in the simplest way to the youngest child ; and for young children who are able to read and will enjoy for themselves the wonderful stories of Jesus, the greatest figure the world has ever seen.

I have written the stories in simple, straightforward language so that the mother will not continually have to stop to explain the meaning of words or sentences, and so that the child, however young, may listen with understanding and enjoyment. I have used the words of the original text where it is possible, and have kept closely to the Gospel stories, so that when children eventually read them for themselves in the New Testament, they will recognize them with delight as those they have heard almost from their early infancy.

As soon as a child can listen quietly to a tale, he or she should be told the story of Jesus. It is an ideal story for young, developing minds — a tale of great interest and beauty, and with enough of drama to hold the child enthralled from beginning to end. It is also one of the finest ways of instilling in children such precepts as ' Love One Another ', and of teaching them that goodness, kindness, unselfishness and justice are among the greatest things in the

world. Example is one of the soundest ways of teaching these virtues — and in Jesus the child has a perfect hero to follow: a man of complete integrity, of boundless kindness; just, fearless and merciful; the Son of God, able to heal bodies as well as souls; bringing a message of love that has sounded down the centuries. He is also the friend of every child, and a storyteller that the children of His day must have been enthralled to hear. To our own young children He can seem very near, very loving, and very lovable.

There are many beautiful pictures in this book, and I am indeed grateful to the artist, Elsie Walker, for interpreting the stories with so much understanding. I like to think of the thousands of children who will sit close to their mothers, hearing them read the wonderful old stories, at the same time gazing with delight on the lovely pictures that bring the tales to life. I hope that those same children will remember for years the simple stories and the delightful illustrations that accompany them.

Enid Blyton

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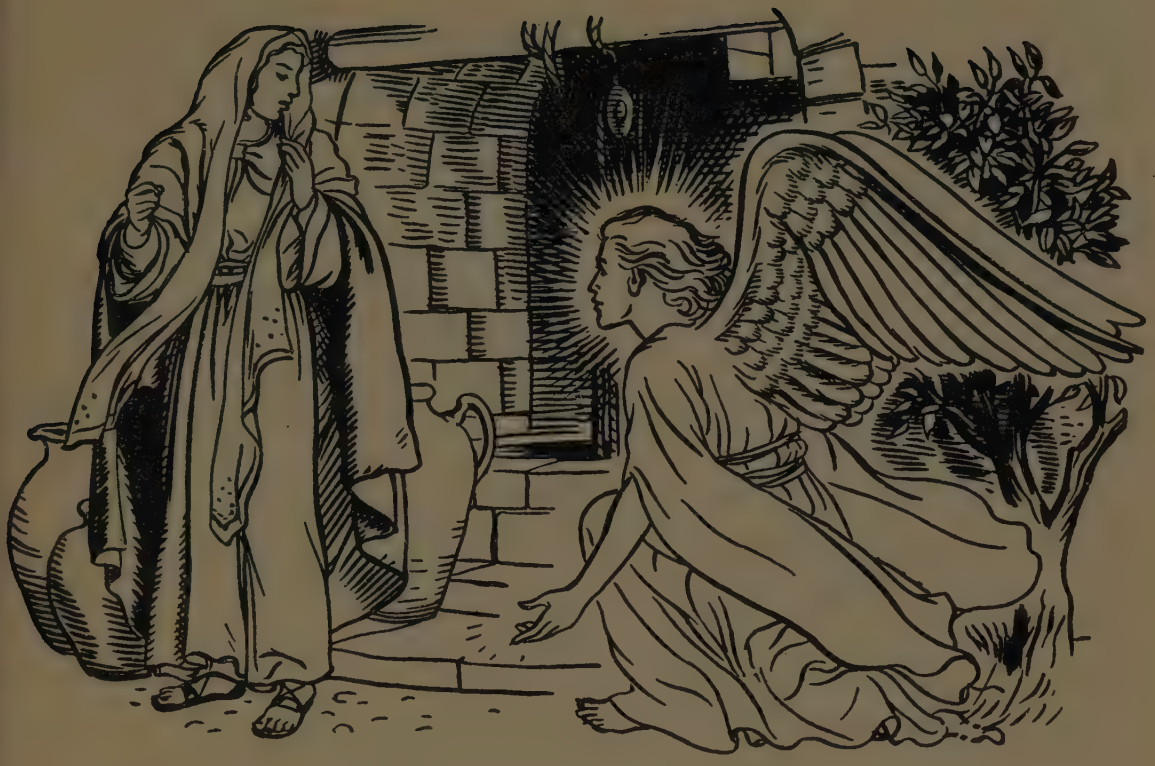


I

The First Christmas

NEARLY two thousand years ago there lived in the town of Nazareth in Palestine a girl called Mary. One day an angel came to her with great news.

'Hail, Mary!' said the angel. 'I bring you great tidings. You will have a little baby boy, and you must call Him Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. He will be the Son of God, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.'

Now Mary was only a village girl, and she could

hardly believe this news; but as she gazed up at the angel, she knew it was true. She was full of joy and wonder. She was to have a baby boy of her own, and He was to be the little Son of God.

Mary married a carpenter called Joseph, and together they lived in a little house on the hillside. Her heart sang as she thought of the tiny baby who was to come to her that winter.

The summer went by, and it was autumn. Then the winter came — and with it arrived men who put up a big notice in the town. Mary went to read it.

It was a notice saying that everyone must go to their own home-town and pay taxes. This meant that Mary and Joseph must leave Nazareth, and go to Bethlehem, for that was where their families had once lived.

'You shall ride on the donkey,' said Joseph. 'I will walk beside you. We shall be three or four days on the way, but the little donkey will take you easily.'

So Mary and Joseph set off to go to Bethlehem. Mary rode on the little donkey, and Joseph walked beside her, leading it. Many other people were on the roads too, for everyone had to go to pay their taxes. Mary and Joseph travelled for some days, and one night Mary felt very tired.

So Mary and Joseph set off for Bethlehem . . .

'When shall we be there?' said Mary. 'I feel tired. I want to lie down and rest.'

'There are the lights of Bethlehem,' said Joseph, pointing through the darkness to where some lights twinkled on a hill-top. 'We shall soon be there.'

'Shall we find room at Bethlehem?' said Mary. 'There are so many people going there.'

'We will go to an inn,' said Joseph. 'There you will find warmth and food, comfort and rest.'

When they climbed up the hill to the town of Bethlehem, Mary felt so tired that she longed to go to the inn at once.

'Here it is,' said Joseph, and he stopped the little donkey before a building that was well lighted. Joseph called for the inn-keeper, and a man came to the door, holding up a lantern so that he might see the travellers.

'Can you give us a room quickly?' said Joseph. 'My wife is very tired, and needs to rest at once.'

'My inn is full, and there is not a bed to be had in the whole town,' said the inn-keeper. 'You will find nowhere to sleep. There is no room at the inn.'

'Can't you find us a resting-place somewhere?' said Joseph, anxiously. 'My wife has come far and is so tired.'

The man swung his lantern up to look at Mary, who sat patiently on the donkey, waiting. He saw how tired she was, how white her face looked, and how patiently she sat there. He was filled with pity, and he wondered what he could do.

'I have a cave at the back of my inn, where my oxen sleep,' he said. 'Your wife could lie there. I will have it swept for you and new straw put down. But that is the best I can offer you.'

So Joseph said they would sleep in the cave that night, and he helped Mary off the donkey. She walked wearily round to the cave in the hillside, and saw the servant putting down piles of clean straw for her.

Mary lay down in the straw. Joseph looked after her tenderly. He brought her milk to drink, he made her a pillow of a rug, and he hung his cloak over the doorway so that the wind could be kept away.

Their little donkey was with them in the stable too. He ate his supper hungrily, looking round at Mary and Joseph as he munched the hay. Mary smelt the near-by oxen, and felt the warmth their bodies made.

And that night Jesus was born to Mary, in the little stable at Bethlehem. Mary held Him closely

'See,' said Joseph, 'there is a manger here full of soft hay. It will be a cradle for Him.'

in her arms, looking at Him with joy and love. The oxen looked round too, and the little donkey stared with large eyes. The doves watched and cooed softly. The little Son of God was there!

'Joseph, bring me the clothes I had with me,' said Mary. 'I thought perhaps the baby would be born whilst we travelled and I brought His swaddling-clothes with me.'

In those far-off days the first clothes a baby wore were called his swaddling-clothes. He was wrapped round and round in a long piece of linen cloth. Mary took the linen from Joseph, and wrapped the baby in His swaddling-clothes. Then she wondered where to put Him, for she wanted to sleep.

'He cannot lie on this straw,' said Mary, anxiously. 'Oh, Joseph, we have no cradle for our little baby.'

'See,' said Joseph, 'there is a manger here full of soft hay. It will be a cradle for Him.'

Joseph put the tiny child into the manger, laying Him down carefully in the soft hay. How small He was! How downy His hair was, and how tiny His fingers were with their pink nails!

Then Mary, tired out, fell asleep on the straw, while Joseph kept watch beside her, and the baby slept peacefully in the manger near by. The lantern

light flickered when the wind stole in, and sometimes the oxen stamped on the floor.

That was the first Christmas, the birthday of the little Christ-child. The little Son of God was born, the great teacher of the world — but only Joseph and Mary knew that at last He had come.

No bells rang out at His birth. The people in the inn slept soundly, not guessing that the Son of God was in a near-by stable.

But the angels in heaven knew the great happening. They must spread the news. They must come to our world and tell someone. They had kept watch over the city of Bethlehem that night, and they were filled with joy to know that the little Son of God was born.

2

The Shepherds in the Night

WHO was awake to hear the angels' news? There was no one in the town awake that night, but on the hillside outside Bethlehem there were some shepherds, watching their sheep.

They spoke quietly together. They had much to talk about that night, for they had watched hundreds of people walking and riding by their quiet fields, on the way to pay their taxes at Bethlehem. It was seldom that the shepherds saw so many people.

As the shepherds talked, looking round at their quiet sheep, a very strange thing happened. The sky became bright, and a great light appeared in it, and shone all round them. The shepherds were surprised and frightened. What was this brilliant light that shone in the darkness of the night?

They looked up fearfully. Then in the middle of the dazzling light they saw a beautiful angel. He

shone too, and he spoke to them in a voice that sounded like mighty music.

'See,' said one shepherd to another in wonder. 'An angel!'

They all fell upon their knees, and some covered their faces with their cloaks, afraid of the dazzling light. They were trembling.

Then the voice of the angel came upon the hillside, full of joy and happiness.

'Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you — you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger.'

The shepherds listened in the greatest wonder. They gazed at the angel in awe, and listened to this wonderful being with his great over-shadowing wings. As they looked, another strange thing happened, which made the shepherds tremble even more.

The dark sky disappeared, and in its place came a crowd of shining beings, bright as the sun, filling the whole sky. Everywhere the shepherds looked there were angels, singing joyfully..

'Glory to God in the highest,' sang the host of

'Glory to God in the highest,' sang the host of angels, 'and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

angels, 'and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

Over and over again the angels sang these words, and the shepherds, amazed, afraid and wondering, listened and marvelled. Surely all the angels in heaven were over Bethlehem that night.

Then, as the shepherds watched, the dazzling light slowly faded away, and the darkness of the night came back. The angels vanished with the light, and then the sky was quite dark again, set with twinkling stars that had been outshone by the glory of the angels. A sheep bleated and a dog barked. There was nothing to show that heaven had opened to the shepherds that night.

The frightened men were silent for a time, and then they began to talk in low voices that gradually became louder.

'They were angels. How dazzling they were! We saw angels. They came to us, the shepherds on the hillside.'

'It couldn't have been a dream. Nobody could dream like that.'

'I was frightened. I hardly dared to look at the angels at first.'

'Why did they come to us? Why should they choose men like us to sing to?'

'You heard what the first angel said — he said a Saviour had been born to us, Christ the Lord. He said that He was born in the city of David to-night — that means in Bethlehem, for Bethlehem is the city of David!'

'Can it be true?'

'We will go and find the little King. I want to see Him.'

'We cannot go at midnight. And how do we know where He is?'

'Why should the Holy Child be put in a manger? Surely He should have a cradle!'

'He must have been born to one of the late travellers, who could find no room at the inn. They must have had to put Him in a manger. I am going to see.'

The shepherds, excited and full of great wonder, went up the hillside to Bethlehem. They left their dogs to guard the sheep, all but one who went with them.

Soon they came to the inn, and, at the back, where the stable was built into the hillside cave, they saw a light. 'Let us go to the stable and see if the Son of God is there,' whispered one shepherd. So, treading softly, they went round to the back of the inn, and came to the entrance of the stable. Across it

was stretched Joseph's rough cloak to keep out the wind. The shepherds peered over it into the stable.

They saw what the angel had told them — a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger!

On the straw, asleep, was Mary. Near by was Joseph, keeping watch over her and the child.

'There's the baby,' whispered the shepherds, in excitement. 'In the manger, wrapped in swaddling-clothes. There is the Saviour, the little Son of God.'

Mary heard what they said. She lifted the child from the manger and took Him on her knee. The shepherds knelt down before Him and worshipped Him. Again and again they told the wondering Mary all that had happened.

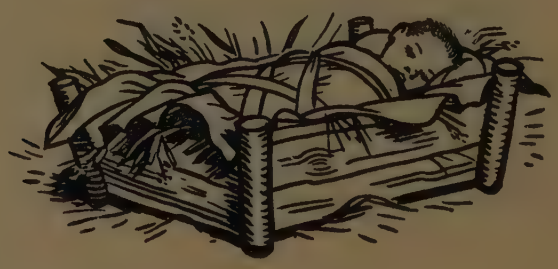
The oxen stared, and the dog pressed close to his master, wondering at the strange happenings of the night. Then, seeing that Mary was tired, the shepherds went at last, walking softly in the darkness.

'We will tell everyone the news tomorrow!' said the shepherds. 'Everyone. What will they say when they know that while they slept we have seen angels?'

Down the hill they went, back to their sheep, sometimes looking up into the sky to see if an angel might once again appear. All through that night they talked eagerly of the angels, the Holy Child in the stable, and of Mary, His gentle mother.

The next day they told everyone of what had happened to them in the night, and many people went to peep in at the stable, to see the little child.

Mary held Him close to her, and thought often of the angel she herself had seen nine months before. She thought of the excited shepherds, and the host of shining angels they too had seen and heard. Her baby was the little Son of God. Mary could hardly believe such a thing was true.



3

The Three Wise Men

And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from country far.
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.

FAR far away from Bethlehem, in a land that lay to the east, there lived some wise and learned men. At night these men studied the stars in the heavens. They said that the stars showed them the great thoughts of God. They said that when a new star appeared, it was God's way of telling men that some great thing was happening in the world.

Then, one night, when the wise men were watching, a new star appeared in the sky. The second night the star was brighter still. The third night it was so dazzling that its light seemed to put out the twinkling of the other stars.

'God has sent this star to say that something wonderful is happening,' said the wise men. 'We will look in our old, old books, where wisdom is kept, and we will find out what this star means.'

So they studied their old wise books, and they found in them a tale of a great King who was to be

born into the world to rule over it. He was to be King of the Jews, and ruler of the world.

'The star seems to stand over Israel, the kingdom of the Jews,' said one wise man. 'This star must mean that the great King is born at last. We will go to worship Him, for our books say He will be the greatest King in the world.'

'We will take Him presents of gold and frankincense and myrrh,' said another. 'We will tell our servants to make ready to go with us.'

So, a little while later, when the star was still brilliant every night in the sky, the three wise men set off on their camels. They were like kings in their own country, and a long train of servants followed behind on swift-footed camels. They travelled for many days and nights, and always at night the great star shone before them to guide them on their way.

They came at last to the land of Israel, where the little Jesus had been born. They went, of course, to the city where the Jewish King lived, thinking that surely the new little King would be there, in the palace of Jerusalem.

Herod was the king there, and he was a wicked man. When his servants came running to tell him that three rich men, seated on magnificent camels,

The three wise men followed the star to Bethlehem.

with a train of servants behind them, were at the gates of the palace, Herod bade his servants bring them before him.

The wise men went to see Herod. They looked strange and most kingly in their turbans and flowing robes. They asked Herod a question that amazed and angered him.

'Where is the child who is born King of the Jews?' they asked. 'His star has gone before us in the east, and we have brought presents for Him, and we wish to worship Him. Where is He?'

'I am the King,' said Herod, full of anger. 'What is this child you talk of? And what is this star?'

The wise men told him all they knew. 'We are certain that a great King has been born,' they said, 'and we must find Him. Can you not tell us where He is?'

Herod sat silent for a moment. Who was this new-born King of whom these rich strangers spoke? Herod was quite certain they were speaking the truth. He could see that these men were learned, and knew far more than he did.

'I will find out where this new-born King is, and kill Him,' thought Herod to himself. 'But this I will not tell these men. They shall go to find the child

for me, and tell me where He is — then I will send my soldiers to kill Him.'

So Herod spoke craftily to the wise men. 'I will find out what you want to know. I have wise men in my court who know the sayings of long-ago Jews, who said that in due time a great King would be born. Perhaps this is the child you mean.'

Then Herod sent for his own wise men and bade them look in the books they had, to see what was said of a great King to be born to the Jews. The learned men looked and they found what they wanted to know.

'The King will be born in the city of Bethlehem,' they said.

'Where is that?' asked the wise men.

'Not far away,' said Herod. 'It will not take you long to get there.'

'We will go now,' said the three wise men, and they turned to go. But Herod stopped them.

'Wait,' he said. 'When you find this new-born King, come back here to tell me where He is, for I too would worship Him.'

The wise men did not know that Herod meant to kill the little King, and not to worship Him. 'You shall be told where He is,' they said. 'We will return here and tell you.'

Then they mounted their camels and went to find the city of Bethlehem, which, as Herod had said, was not far away.

The sun set, and once again the brilliant star flashed into the sky. It seemed to stand exactly over the town of Bethlehem. The strangers, with their train of servants, went up the hill to the town, their harness jingling and their jewelled turbans and cloaks flashing in the brilliant light of the great star.

They passed the wondering shepherds, and went into the little city. They stopped to ask a woman to guide them. 'Can you tell us where to find a new-born child?' they said.

The woman stared at these rich strangers in

surprise. She felt sure they must want to know where Jesus was, for everyone knew how angels had come to proclaim His birth.

'Yes,' she said, 'you will find the baby in the house yonder. He was born in the stable, because there was no room for Him in the inn — but now that the travellers have left the city, room was found for His parents at that house. You will find Him there with His mother.'

The star seemed to stand right over the house to which the woman pointed. The wise men felt sure it was the right one. They made their way to it, riding on their magnificent camels.

4

The Warning of the Angel

When Mary saw these three grandly dressed men kneeling before her tiny baby, she was amazed. Angels had come to proclaim His birth, shepherds had worshipped Him — and now here were three great men kneeling before Him.

'Here is gold for Him, a gift for a King . . .'

'We have found the little King,' said one wise man. 'We have brought Him kingly presents. Here is gold for Him, a gift for a King.'

'And here is sweet-smelling frankincense,' said another.

'And I bring Him myrrh, rare and precious,' said the third.

These were indeed kingly gifts, and Mary looked at them in wonder, holding the baby closely against her. He was her own child, but He seemed to belong to many others too — to the angels in heaven, to the simple shepherds in the fields, to wise and rich men of far countries. He had been born for the whole world, not only for her.

The wise men left and went to stay for the night at the inn. There was room for them, because the many travellers who had come to the little city had left some time before.

'Tomorrow we will go back to Herod and tell him where the new-born King is, so that he may come and worship Him,' said the wise men. But in the night God sent dreams to them, to warn them not to return to Herod, but to go back to their country another way.

So they mounted their camels, and returned to

their country without going near Jerusalem, where Herod lived.

In vain Herod waited for the three wise men to return. His servants soon found out that they had been to Bethlehem but had returned home another way. This made Herod so angry that he hardly knew what he was doing.

First he sent his soldiers after the wise men to stop them, but they were too far away. Then he made up his mind to find the new-born baby and kill Him.

But no one knew where the child was, nor did anyone even know how old He might be. The wise men themselves had not known how old the baby was. Herod sat on his throne, his heart black and angry.

'Call my soldiers to me,' he said at last.

They came before him, and Herod gave them a cruel and terrible command.

'Go to the town of Bethlehem and kill every boy-child there who is under two years old,' he said. 'Go to the villages round about and kill the young baby-boys there too. Let no one escape.'

The soldiers rode off, their harness jingling loudly. They rode up the hill to Bethlehem, and once again the quiet shepherds stared in wonder at strange visitors. But soon, alas, they heard the screams and cries of the mothers whose little sons had been killed, and they knew that something dreadful was happening.

Every boy-child was killed by the cruel soldiers, and when their terrible work was done, they rode down the hills again, past the watching shepherds, to tell Herod that his commands had been obeyed.

'There is no boy-child under two years old left in Bethlehem or the villages near by,' said the captain of the soldiers, and Herod was well pleased.

'The new-born King is dead,' he thought. 'I have been clever. I have killed the baby who might one day have been greater than I am.'

But Jesus was not killed. He was safe. On the night that the wise men had left Mary, the little family had gone to bed, and were asleep. But, as Joseph

slept, an angel came to him in his dreams, and spoke to him.

'Arise,' said the shining angel. 'Take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to return; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.'

Joseph awoke at once. He sat up. The angel was gone, but the words he had said still sounded in Joseph's ears. Joseph knew that there was danger near, and he awoke Mary.

'We must make ready and go,' he said, and he told her what the angel had said. Then Mary knew they must leave, and she went to put her few things into a bundle, and to lift up the baby Jesus. Joseph went to get the little donkey, and soon, in the silence of the night, the four of them fled away secretly.

They went as quickly as they could, longing to pass over into the land of Egypt, which did not belong to Herod. He would have no power over them there.

So, when Herod's soldiers came a little later to the city of Bethlehem, Jesus was not there. He was safe in Egypt, where Herod could not reach Him.

And there, until it was safe for Him to return to His own country, the little new-born King lived and grew strong and kind and loving. No one knew He

An angel came to Joseph in his dreams, and spoke to him.

was a king. His father was a carpenter, and His friends were the boys of the villages around.

But His mother knew. Often she remembered the tale of the shepherds who had seen the angels in the sky, and she remembered too the three wise men who had come to kneel before her baby. She still had the wonderful presents they had given to her for Him. He would one day be the greatest King in the world.

But it was not by power or riches or might that the baby in the stable grew to be the greatest man the world has ever seen. It was by something greater than all these — by LOVE alone.

That is the story of the first Christmas, which we remember to this day, and which we keep with joy and delight.

5

The Little Boy Jesus

MARY and Joseph did not go back to their own country until an angel had told them it was safe to do so.

'Arise,' said the angel, 'and take the young child

and His mother, and go back to your own land; for they are dead who wanted to kill your child.'

So Mary and Joseph packed all their things, saddled their little donkey, and set off back to their own land.

'We will go to the town of Nazareth,' said Joseph. 'Our friends are there. We shall be happy in that place.'

And so one day the little company arrived at Nazareth, set high up on the green hillside.

'Now we are home again,' said Mary, gladly. 'See how the little white houses shine in the sun. We will have one of those to live in, Joseph, and our little Jesus shall grow up here in the sunshine, and learn to help you in your shop.'

So Jesus was brought up in one of the little white houses on the hillside. It was made of sun-dried bricks, and He helped Joseph to whitewash it each year, so that it shone clean and white.

In this little house Joseph set up his carpenter's shop. Mary and Jesus liked to hear all the hammering and sawing that went on. Jesus often went into the shop and watched His father. He sometimes lifted a heavy hammer, and played with the big and little nails.

'One day I will help you,' He told Joseph. 'I shall be a carpenter too.'

Jesus did all the things that the other children of Nazareth did. He went to fetch water from the well for His mother in the old stone pitcher. Even today the people of Nazareth see the same old well, where once, years ago, a bright-eyed boy called Jesus came to fetch water and to talk to the other children there.

Jesus wandered over the hillside too, and picked flowers for His mother. The hillside was covered with them in spring and summer. Jesus talked with the

shepherds, and heard their tales. He played with the lambs, listened to the birds singing, and watched the sower sowing his seed in the fields.

His mother told Him many stories. You know them too. She told Him how God made the world. He heard about the Garden of Eden and how Adam and Eve were sent away from it. He liked hearing about Noah and his ark, and He loved the rainbow when He saw it in the sky, and remembered how God had set it there as a promise never to flood the world again.

He knew the stories of the giant Samson, of David and Goliath, and Daniel in the lions' den. Mary taught Him to obey God's commands, and to pray to Him each day. Jesus listened eagerly, and learnt everything His mother could tell Him.

When He was old enough He, like you, went to school. He had to learn His lessons — and He had to learn something else too. He had to learn the law of God, and this was very difficult.

The law of God had been written down by Jewish teachers, and they had filled books full of tiny laws as well as big ones. The tiny laws told people exactly how they should wash a plate, and arrange their clothes, and things like that. When Jesus saw that the people

sometimes thought more of doing these small things correctly than they did of such big things as being kind and generous to one another, He was puzzled.

'Surely it is better to be like old Sarah, who lives down the hill and is always kind to everyone in trouble, though she forgets the little commands — than it is to be like James, who never forgets the little things, but is unjust and unkind all the time,' thought Jesus.

He was only a boy then, but He thought things out for Himself. He prayed to God to show Him what was really right and good.

'One day I shall know these things,' He said to Himself. 'I shall know enough to tell others what I think. I shall be able to teach them and help them. That is the thing I want to do most of all.'

6

Twelve Years Old

ONCE each year the Jewish people kept a great Feast or holiday. They liked to go to Jerusalem, where their beautiful Temple was built. Joseph and Mary loved to go too.

'What do you do there when you go?' asked Jesus.

'There are meetings and services,' said Mary. 'And we meet many people there, and see old friends. It is an exciting and happy time. When you are twelve we will take you with us, Jesus.'

So, when He was twelve years old, His mother kept her promise. 'You can come with us,' she said.

'You are a big boy now — you have learnt the law of God, and it is time that you went to the Temple with us and became one of the members of the Church. You must promise to keep the law, you know.'

It was very exciting to think of such a long journey. Jesus had heard so much of Jerusalem and the Temple. Now He was really going to see it.

'I shall walk down strange roads, I shall see hundreds of people. At night we shall camp out by the wayside, and see the stars shining above us,' He thought. 'And perhaps I shall be able to talk to learned and wise men in the Temple and ask them some of the things I want so much to know.'

The great day came. Joseph and Mary were ready to go. Joseph had finished all the work he had to do and Mary had tidied up the house. Everything was ready. Joseph shut the door of the little house, and smiled to see Jesus' excited face.

Other children were going too. They ran to join Jesus. They all liked this wise, kindly boy and the things He said and did.

'Walk with us!' they cried. 'We're going down the hill and across the plain — and then we cross the River Jordan. Come along!'

It was a lovely journey over the hills and plains

to Jerusalem. Jesus felt the spring sun warm on His shoulders, He heard the birds singing, and saw the thousands of gay flowers under His feet.

There was plenty to see on the way. Each day was exciting — and the nights were even more exciting, for then camp fires were made, meals were cooked, and old songs and hymns were sung by the hundreds of people in the little camps.

Jesus liked to watch all the lights from the camp fires. He liked to lie on His back and look up at the brilliant stars. He liked to hear the singing.

Then at last they came to Jerusalem, and went to the Holy Temple. Jesus stood and looked at the beautiful building.

'That is the house of God, my Heavenly Father,' he thought. 'He dwells there. I am going to His house.'

Jesus was taken into the Temple. God seemed very near to Him there. He was taken before the wise men of the Temple, and they made Him a member of the Church — a Disciple of the Law, as they called it.

'Now you must count yourself grown-up,' said the wise men. 'You must keep all the laws of the Church.'

And then the great Feast was over. The holiday was ended. It was time to go home.

'Here are our things for you to carry, Joseph,' said Mary. 'How lovely it has been to meet all our old friends again! How good to know that Jesus belongs to our Church! And how nice it will be to be back home again in our own little house!'

Mary did not see Jesus all that day. She wondered where He was. Perhaps He was with the other boys. She must think of Him as grown-up now, and let Him go away on His own. But where could He be?

'He is sure to come and look for us when we camp tonight,' she thought. But the night came, and there was no Jesus.

'We must look for Him, Joseph,' said Mary,

anxiously. 'Go and ask the other boys if they know where He is.'

'No,' said the boys. 'We haven't seen Him at all. He didn't walk with us.'

Nobody knew where Jesus was. Not one person had seen Him since they had left Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph were very worried.

'We will go back to Jerusalem,' said Joseph. So back they went. But still they could not find Jesus. He was not at the house where they had stayed. Nobody could tell them anything about Him.

Jerusalem was a big city. Mary and Joseph hardly knew where to look. For three days they went up and down the streets, asking everyone they met the same question. 'Have you seen our boy Jesus?'

'There is only one place left to look,' said Mary, at last. 'And that is the Temple itself. Jesus loved the Temple, Joseph. He wanted to ask the wise men so many questions, and there was no time. Perhaps He has gone back to the Temple.'

They went to see — and there in the Temple they found Jesus. He had not been wandering about the great city, playing, or looking at the strange sights. He had been in the Temple all the time, an earnest, urgent little boy, anxious to

They marvelled at His knowledge and wisdom.

find out all He could about God and His commands.

He had found the wise men, the ones who knew more about the Jewish law than anyone in the land. He had asked them questions — questions they did not know how to answer! They were amazed at this young boy who knew so much about the law of God — it seemed that He knew more than they did!

They kept Him there hour after hour, asking Him questions too. Jesus forgot everything except that now at last He was finding out things He needed to know. He felt close to God in the Temple, He felt that His Heavenly Father had welcomed Him, that He was really and truly His son.

Perhaps in those three strange days, when He was talking so earnestly with the wise and learned men, Jesus felt for the first time His great power for doing good. He listened to all the wise men said, turning their long words into simple ones in His mind, seeing how easy it would be to tell the common people these things in simple language and stories.

Here, in the Temple, He belonged to God, more than He belonged to Joseph and Mary. He stood there in the midst of all the wise men, and they marvelled at His knowledge and wisdom.

And then He suddenly saw His parents near by,

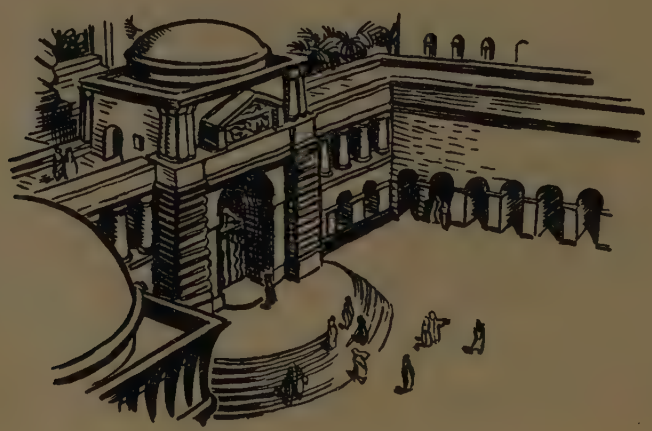
looking at Him with anxious, troubled eyes! Mary went to Him, weeping with joy.

'Son!' she said. 'Why have you behaved like this? Your father and I have been looking for you everywhere. We have been so worried.'

Jesus was surprised. 'But did you not guess where I would be?' He said. 'I had to come to my Father's house, and learn the things I should know.'

He went home with Mary and Joseph. He became their young boy again, and obeyed them in all things. He was wise and He was wonderful, but the time had not yet come when He could do exactly as He wanted to.

So He settled down again in Nazareth, and pondered over all the things He had learnt in the Temple. He knew that wisdom and understanding could only grow slowly, and He was content to live with His family, helping His father and mother, until the right time came.



7

Jesus Grows Up

WHEN He was twelve years old, Jesus began to help Joseph, His father, in the shop. He had always liked to play with hammer and nails, but now He had to learn how to be a real carpenter.

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'You can try to mend this,' Joseph would say to Him, when someone brought a broken bench.

'See — this leg is no good. Make a new one and fit it in properly, as you have so often seen me do.'

Jesus liked working with His hands. He could think as He worked, and it was pleasant up in the little white house on the hills, with the door wide open to the sun, and the birds singing outside.

Jesus sawed and hammered, and thought long thoughts as He worked. He remembered all He had learnt from His teachers. He remembered what the priests at the Temple had told Him. He thought about God the Father, and how great and good He was. Then He thought sadly how unkind and unjust and cruel so many people were.

'There is Simon — he speaks so roughly to his old mother. And Martha, who hits her little brother,

and Thomas, who never tells the truth. Why do they do these things? How sad the great Father God must be to see His children on earth being cruel and unkind!'

As He worked with His tools, Jesus began to wish that He could go out into the world and tell the people all the things He thought about. If only they were told, perhaps they would believe, and be good and kind!

'It is goodness and kindness and justice that matter so much,' thought the growing Jesus. 'If we all loved one another and were good to one another, there would be no more wars, no more unhappiness, no more cruelty. One day I must tell everyone these things. That is really my work, the work I must do.'

But for a long time Jesus stayed at home and did not go out into the world to preach and teach, as He so much wanted to do. He knew that until He could feel only goodness in His own heart, and could be sure that not one bad thing was in Him, He was not ready to teach others. He must work, and think, and pray, and He must grow wiser and wiser until the right time came.

'The son of Joseph the carpenter will grow into a

good man,' said the people of Nazareth to one another.

'We love Him,' said the children.

'He does good work,' said the men. 'He never shirks His job. We may be sure that whatever we ask Him to make or to mend, He will do well and honestly. He is a fine workman.'

'He is a good son,' thought His mother, Mary, gazing at Him as she so often did, and marvelling at the goodness in His face, and the wise things He said. She remembered the angels who sang at His birth. What would He grow into, this wise, thoughtful son of hers?

Through those long years of boyhood, when Jesus was slowly growing into a man, He taught Himself all the things He wanted to teach other people.

'If I teach good things I must be good myself,' He thought. 'God, my Heavenly Father, will help me. I will pray to Him often, and He will give me the wisdom and goodness and power that I shall need when I go out into the world.'

So Jesus grew from boyhood into manhood, and now was a man, a carpenter like His father. Everyone trusted Him and liked Him. Joseph was proud of this son of his, so fair and just and wise.

Surely the time was coming near when Jesus might

leave His work with hammer and saw, and go out into the world and preach?

No. It was not yet time. Joseph died, and Mary turned to Jesus in her sorrow. Jesus could not leave her then. He must comfort her, work for her and be with her.

He was thirty years old when the time came for Him to leave Nazareth and go out to teach people all the things He knew. He was a man, wise and full of a great heavenly power, a power that would help Him to do miracles and wonders.

'I am going out into the world to found a Kingdom of Love,' He told His wondering mother. 'I must save the world from sin and shame and cruelty. I must give it love and goodness instead.'

And so Jesus left the little white house on the hills of Nazareth, and went out into the world — the Son of God come down to earth, ready to preach the goodness of His Heavenly Father, and to do at last the work that He had dreamed of for so many, many years.

'He is a good son,' thought His mother, Mary.

8

Jesus Meets His Cousin John

JESUS had a cousin called John. He was older than Jesus, but he too had thought long thoughts, he too wanted to be good and to tell others they must leave their bad ways and be good.

John was a strange fellow, fierce and fearless and honest, dressed in a rough coat of camel's hair, tied round with a leather girdle. He walked about the countryside, preaching, talking to everyone who would listen.

The children followed him about. They thought he must be a wild man. 'What do you eat?' asked one boy, timidly. 'You have no home and no money. Do you starve?'

'I eat the honey that the wild bees make,' said John. 'And when those great insects the locusts fly down, I eat those too.'

When people came to John and told him that they had listened to his words, and wanted to do good, he told them that they must show everyone that they had promised this.

'Come with me to the River Jordan,' said John. 'Let me take you right into the water, so that its waves may wash over you. Let everyone come and see you in the river, and hear me say that just as the water washes away dirt and makes you clean, so will you yourself wash away the bad things in your heart, and make it clean and ready for good things to come there instead.'

Then all the people who wanted to make their hearts clean, and to promise to do right, went to the river with John. He baptized them in the water, and when they came out they felt that their sins had been washed away, and that they could begin life again and be good and kind.

Jesus Meets His Cousin John

The people called Jesus' cousin John the Baptist, because he led them to the river and baptized them.

'This John the Baptist is a great man,' they said to one another.

'He is not afraid of anyone,' said a woman. 'If he sees someone doing wrong he tells them so. I heard him tell even the soldiers that they were not to be cruel.'

'In our Holy Book it says that one day the Son of God will come to us,' said a man. 'Perhaps John is he — perhaps he is the one we look for?'

'No, I am not,' said John. 'Wait until the Son of God comes to you and you will see that He is mightier than I am. I am not fit to do up His shoes!'

And then one day Jesus came to the River Jordan. He had heard of His great cousin and He had come to talk to him. John knew Him at once. There was such goodness in Jesus' face that he gazed at Him in awe and wonder.

'Behold!' said John. 'Behold the Lamb of God!'

'I come to be baptized by you,' Jesus said to him.

'You have no sins to be washed away,' said John. 'You should baptize me, not I you.'

But he led Jesus into the water and baptized Him as He wished. And then a strange thing happened.

As Jesus came up out of the water the sky opened, and a bright light shone forth. The spirit of God, the Heavenly Father, flew down in the shape of a dove, and seemed to rest on the glistening wet head of Jesus.

And a voice came down from heaven.

'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

9

Satan, the Prince of Evil

JESUS heard the voice from heaven. He saw the sky open and the bright light shine. He saw the dove that came down, and knew that it was from God.

He was amazed and awed at what the voice had said: 'This is my beloved Son.'

He knew then that God had chosen Him to do His work. He was only a village carpenter, but God thought Him worthy to be His own beloved Son.

'I must go into the lonely countryside and think what these things mean,' said Jesus to Himself. 'I know myself what I want to do — and now that God,

'Why do you not turn these stones into bread, and eat?'

my Heavenly Father, has spoken to me, and proclaimed me as His beloved Son, I can perhaps do greater things than I thought.'

So He went into the countryside, and wandered about, forgetting to eat, lost in thought. He was making his plans. He must go to people everywhere and talk to them in simple words. He would bring peace to the sorrowful. He would try to heal those who were sick. Yes, He might even do that, with God's help!

'I shall fight evil wherever I see it. I shall bring a kingdom of love into the world,' thought Jesus.

But Satan was near by—Satan, the Prince of Evil, the enemy of all things good and wise. He saw Jesus in the lonely countryside, and looked into His heart. He saw what great goodness and wisdom and power were there, and he was afraid.

'Perhaps I can tempt this man to use his power in the wrong ways,' thought Satan. 'When people are powerful they become proud and arrogant. Great power makes them so. I will tempt this man to use his power wrongly. He will be able to do miracles of goodness — I will tempt him to do miracles that have no goodness in them!'

So he went and whispered in Jesus' ear.

'You are hungry! You, the Son of God, are hungry! Then why do you not turn these stones into bread, and eat?'

But Jesus took no notice. He would never use His power for Himself, only for others.

Then Satan put another thought into Jesus' head. It seemed for a moment as if He were standing on the topmost pinnacle of the Holy Temple at Jerusalem.

'See how easy it would be to show everyone your great powers,' whispered Satan. 'You want people to know that you are the Son of God, don't you? You want people to believe in you? Then throw yourself

down from this high pinnacle in front of everyone! God's angels will take care of you, you will not be hurt, and everyone will marvel, and believe!'

But still Jesus would not listen. So Satan tried once more. He took Jesus to a high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms and all the greatness of the world lying there before Him.

'Do you see all those kingdoms, with their riches and their greatness?' whispered Satan. 'They are all yours if you will use your great powers for me and not for God. Follow me as so many others do — I will make you the greatest ruler in the world!'

And then Jesus turned round to Satan and said: 'Get you behind me, Satan! I will worship the Lord my God and serve only Him!'

Then Satan fled away, defeated. Jesus was glad and His heart was full of joy. He had conquered the Prince of Evil for ever, and was indeed the Son of God.

'Now I can do my work,' He said. 'Now I can use my power for good. The time has come.'

And He left the lonely countryside and went out into the world to begin His wonderful work.

10

Jesus Chooses His Friends

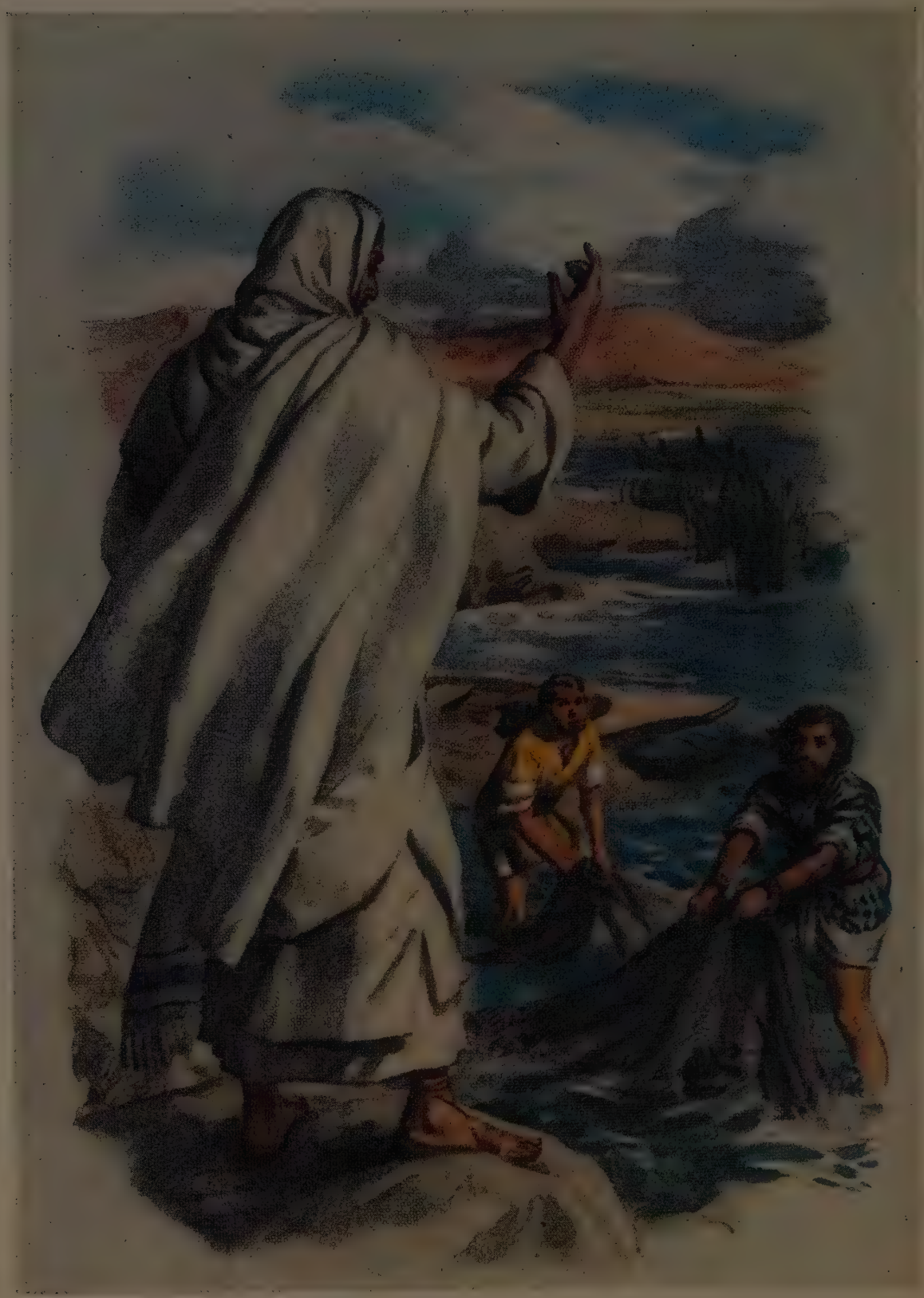
Now at last the time had come for Jesus to preach to the people, and to help them in all the many ways He could.

But it would be difficult for one man alone to do this. 'I must have friends who will help me,' thought Jesus. 'I must have disciples — men I can teach so that they may themselves go out and teach others. But they must be good men, men I can love and trust.'

He went to walk beside the lovely lake of Galilee. Fishermen were at work there, some fishing, some mending nets, and some mending their boats. Jesus watched them, looking closely at each man's face as He passed by.

He saw a boat in which were two brothers, Simon and Andrew. They were good men and good fishermen. Their faces were open and honest. Jesus felt sure He could trust men like these.

He called to them across the shimmering blue water. 'Come with me!' He said. 'I will make you fishers of men!'



'Come with me!' He said. 'I will make you fishers of men!'

This was a strange thing to say, and Simon and Andrew did not understand the words at all. Not for some time did they know that Jesus meant them to go out with Him and catch men to bring them into His kingdom of love. Now they stood up in their boat and looked at the man who called to them.

There was something in His face that made them go to Him. Such goodness shone out of it that they felt they must do what this man said. They rowed to the shore at once and joined Jesus.

There were two other brothers in another boat, mending their nets. Jesus called to them as well. 'Come with me!'

The two brothers came eagerly to this man with the beautiful face. Now Jesus had four friends to help Him, four good men to do as He said, and to love Him and trust Him.

He needed twelve, so He chose eight more. But the four He had chosen first always remained the closest to Him.

One of them was an eager, lovable man, a man who could be kind and brave and loving — but he could be untrustworthy too, and do things he was ashamed of afterwards. That was Simon — and Jesus knew both the good and the bad in Simon, but He

loved him and knew that the good would be more powerful than the bad.

Jesus looked at Simon. 'Your name is Simon,' He said, 'but I shall call you Peter.'

'Why is that?' asked Simon, surprised.

'Because the name Peter means a Rock,' said Jesus. 'I have a great kingdom to build, Peter, and it must be built on rock, not sand. You shall be Peter, a rock, and my kingdom will depend a great deal on you.'

The twelve disciples followed Jesus everywhere, loving Him and worshipping Him, a very happy company of men.

II

Round the Countryside with Jesus

JESUS began His great and wonderful work. Soon His name was on everyone's lips.

'Have you heard what that man Jesus says? You should go to hear Him preach!'

'You can understand every single word He says! He speaks so simply. He tells us that God is our

Heavenly Father who loves us and cares for us. He says we are to trust Him and fear nothing.'

'We must turn from evil and do good. We must pray and be kind and loving. I have never heard such preaching before.'

'The children love Him! They follow Him everywhere. He tells such wonderful stories, you see, that even the little ones can understand. My little boy is always going to hear Him.'

'Don't you think His face is goodness itself? Goodness should only be preached by a man like that! The other preachers I have heard never make me want to be good as this man does. It's because He's so good Himself.'

'Do you know who He is? He's only Jesus, the

son of the carpenter at Nazareth! And yet He is greater and better than anyone I have ever known!'

So the people talked of Him, loving Him, crowding to hear Him in the churches when He preached, gathering round Him on the hills when He talked to them, bringing their children to Him because He loved them and understood them.

And then other things began to be said.

'Listen! Have you heard what Jesus did to old Anna? You know she was so ill? Well, He touched her and made her better! She is walking about again!'

'Have you heard about little John? His foot was always bad, and he couldn't walk on it. His mother took him to Jesus, and He took the boy into His arms and stroked the bad foot gently — and now the child can walk!'

'He does miracles! He is so good that He can do wonders. He is truly the Son of God.'

'Wherever He goes He comforts and heals and brings happiness. His eyes shine with goodness. His hands are full of healing power. Twice have I seen Him, and I have said I will never do a wrong thing again. I felt that I *must* be good when I heard Him preaching.'

'It is both soul and body He heals and makes well. Let us go and hear Him today. We will take the children too, because He loves them so.'

The disciples went about with Jesus, marvelling at His great gifts of healing, listening to His wonderful stories, told in such simple words, helping Him, and caring for Him when He was tired.

And everywhere He went the people flocked round Him, anxious even to touch just the hem of His robe.

'Goodness flows out of Him!' they said. 'Truly He is the Son of God!'

12

Jesus and the Nobleman's Son

Now in the town of Capernaum there lived a nobleman, who had a little son.

The father loved his little boy with all his heart, and petted him and gave him servants to wait on him. Then one day the boy fell ill.

'Get the doctor,' said the nobleman, anxiously. 'The child is hot — he will not play or eat. He is ill!'

Soon the doctor came. 'Send him to bed,' he said. 'He will be better tomorrow.'

But the child was worse next day, not better. The father sent for more and more doctors, for the

little boy was now very ill. The nobleman spoke anxiously to the doctors round the bed.

'What can we do? See, he will die if we do not do something quickly.'

The doctors looked sadly at the nobleman. His son was dying already, and there was nothing they could do. The father rose up in sorrow, for he saw what they did not dare to say. He went into his own room, full of grief and sadness.

His servants came to him.

'Sir,' said one, timidly, 'we love your son, so we have come to tell you of a new and wonderful doctor. He is a preacher and a healer. We have heard marvellous tales of His doings. Could you not ask Him to see your son?'

'Where is this man?' said the nobleman.

'At Cana in Galilee,' answered the servant. 'Shall I fetch Him for you?'

'No, I will go myself,' said the nobleman. He went quickly to say good-bye to the small, restless boy, and then he set out for Cana.

He met people who told him where to find Jesus. 'He is there, in that house,' said a woman, pointing. 'He is not only a healer. He is the Son of God, and He is the most wonderful preacher we ever heard.'

The nobleman did not care about that — all he wanted was a doctor who could make his precious son better. He went into the house and asked for Jesus.

Jesus came into the room where he waited, and looked at the anxious man. The nobleman trusted Him at once, because of the goodness that shone from His face. He felt His power, and was quite sure that this man could cure his son.

'Sir, my little boy lies ill at Capernaum,' he said. 'The doctors fear that he is dying. You can make him better again. Will you come back with me?'

Jesus listened, and wondered if this man, like many others, had come just to see Him do a miracle. A great many people followed Him simply to watch Him doing wonders — and then they said that truly He was the Son of God! But Jesus did not want them to watch for miracles and believe in Him because of those — He wanted them to believe the things He told them, and to make their hearts clean and be good.

He spoke sadly to the nobleman. 'You and the others only want to see me doing wonderful things. You will not believe the things I say unless I do a miracle.'

'Oh, sir, I want neither signs nor wonders,' said the nobleman, in despair. 'All I want is for you to

come back with me now and see if you can make my child better. He will surely die — and I love him so !'

Jesus looked at the anxious father. He was sorry for him, and pitied him in his great grief.

He spoke to him gently. 'Do not be afraid,' He said. 'Your son lives. Go home again, and you will see that my words are true.'

The nobleman believed Jesus at once. He felt a great joy filling his heart. His child was better ! He wasn't going to die ! This man had said so, and a man with a face of such goodness could speak only the truth.

It didn't matter at all that Jesus was not going back with him, was not even going to see his child. It didn't matter that He had only spoken a few words,

and had not put His hands on the little boy to heal him. The father was sure that his son was better.

'This man has such a power for good that somehow He can reach out and heal my child even though he is far away!' thought the man.

He left the house at once and was soon on his way back home.

He came near his house, and saw his servants watching for him. Their faces were full of joy, and they waved to him as he came near. They ran to meet him, shouting loudly.

'Your son is well! He comes to welcome you!'

A servant came out of the house with the little boy. 'I'm better, my father,' said the child. 'I will play a game with you. I am quite better.'

The nobleman took his son into his arms, so full of thankfulness that at first he could hardly speak. He held his child tightly, feeling that he could never let him go.

He looked up at his smiling servants at last. 'Tell me,' he said, 'what time did the child begin to feel better?'

'Sir, he was about to die,' said a servant. 'He lay on his bed at the point of death — and then, at seven, the fever left him, and he was better.'

The nobleman took his son into his arms . . .

'At seven!' said the nobleman, amazed and glad. 'That was the moment when Jesus said to me, "Your son lives!" It was the exact moment. I knew that His power would heal him. Oh, my son, you are well again!'

'Did you see the wonderful doctor, then?' asked the servants, pressing round. 'What did He do? What did He say?'

'You shall all go to hear Him preach,' said the nobleman. 'And each one of us must do what He says. We will believe in Him, and obey all His commands, however difficult they may be.'

'I shall go to Him too,' said the little boy. 'I want to see Him. I want to hear His stories.'

And so, in yet another household there were many who loved Jesus, and believed all He said. The little boy loved Him most of all, and tried to get as near Jesus as he could whenever He told one of His stories.

'Jesus healed me,' he told everyone proudly. 'He made me well again.'

13

The Man by the Pool

THERE was once a young man who had fallen ill. He lay groaning on his mattress, longing to get better. But the time went on, and he grew worse.

'I will take you to the Pool of Bethesda,' said a friend of his. 'Maybe when the angel comes down to the water and ripples it, you will be able to get into the pool and be healed.'

So the friend took the young man to the strange pool. They went through the sheep market at Jerusalem and came to a building called Bethesda or the House of Mercy.

The young man looked curiously at the strange pool. Round it were built five porches. Steps led steeply down to the silent water below.

'I do not like this place,' he said, mournfully. 'See the miserable people lying about on the steps! They all look so ill and unhappy.'

'You look the same,' said the man who had brought him there. 'Now listen — it is said that every now and again an angel comes down and troubles the water. If you can get into the pool first, when that happens, you will feel better. So you must do as all these others are doing, and lie here on the steps and watch the water. Then, as soon as you see it wrinkling and rippling, you must quickly get into it.'

'Will you stay and help me?' asked the young man. But his friend was gone. He had work to do. The young man was left alone.

He lay there, watching the surface of the pool eagerly. Would it wrinkle? Could he get down to the water first, before anyone else? He looked round the steps that led down to the pool. There were so many other people lying there!

They were ill, or lame, or paralysed. Some were blind. They were all waiting for the angel to come down to the water.

They did not know that no angel ever came. The pool was fed by a spring, and when this sometimes bubbled up strongly, it ruffled the surface of the water, and the pool then had healing powers. But the people thought it must be an angel disturbing the pool, and they longed to get into it as soon as that happened.

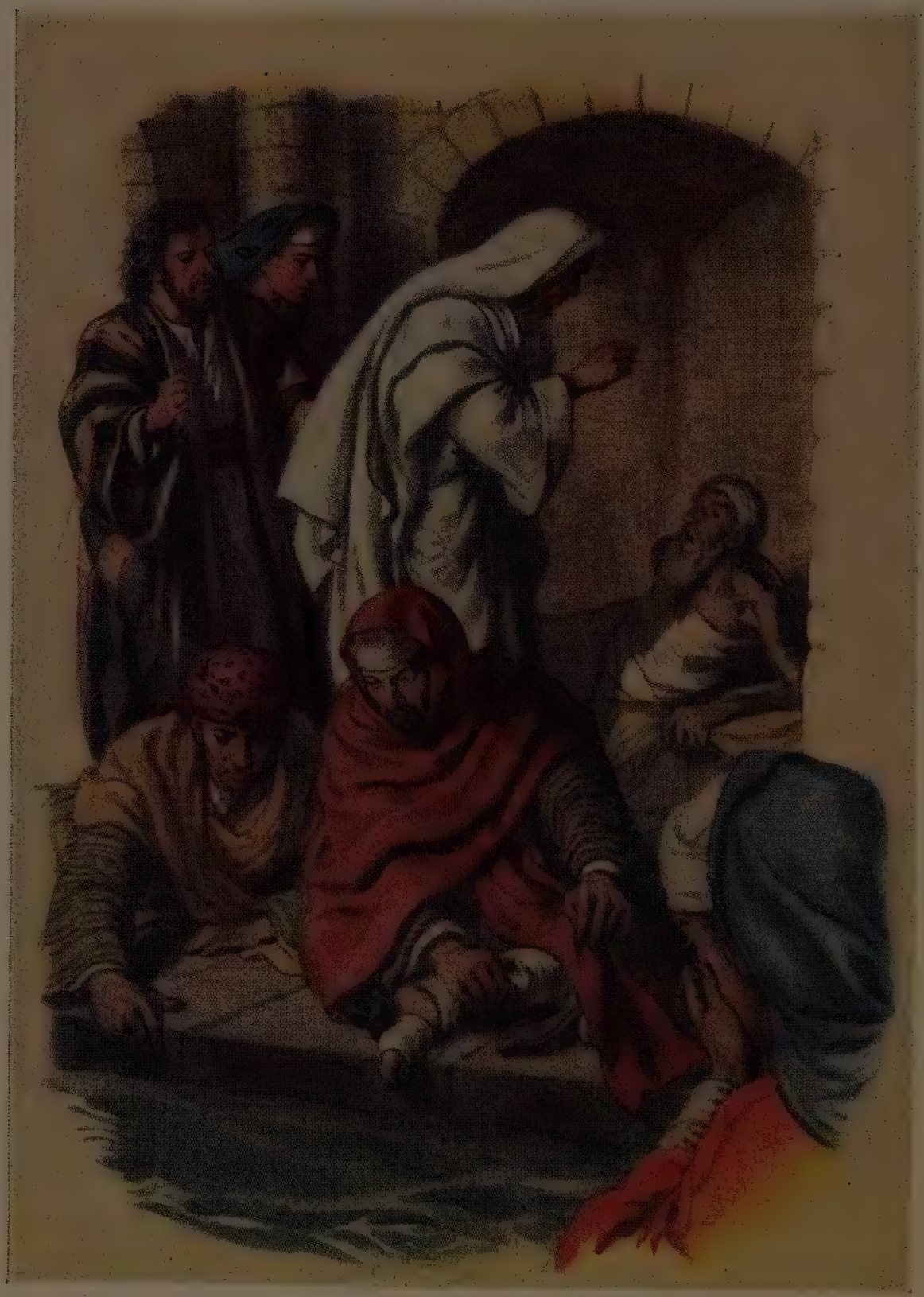
One day the water suddenly began to stir and wrinkle. A murmur came from the watching people.

'The angel comes! See, the water is ruffled!'

And then friends helped them down to the pool quickly. Those without friends to help them tried their best to get down the steep steps by themselves.

The young man never had a friend near to help him. He watched the rippling of the water many many times, as the spring bubbled up, and he tried frantically to get down to the pool, crying, with everyone else, 'The angel is here! He is here!'

But never once did he get into the water first. Year after year went by, and still the man lay there, no longer young now. He was thin and pale, and he grew older and thinner as the years passed. He still watched the water, but he was weaker now, and he was afraid that he would never, never get into the pool first, and feel its healing powers on his poor, ill body.



'Rise, take up your bed and walk!'

One day Jesus heard of the pool. He heard of the crowds of suffering people who lay there, and He was sad.

'I will go there,' He said. 'There may be someone I can help.'

He passed through the porches, looking down with pity on the ill, unhappy people. He came to the man who had now been there for thirty-eight years. He saw how patient and sad he looked, and He knew that he had suffered pain and fear. He was full of compassion for him.

Jesus bent down over him, and spoke to him in His clear, kind voice. 'Do you want to be healed?' He said.

'Sir,' said the man, looking up in surprise at the kindness in the eyes of the stranger above him, 'Sir, I have done my best to be healed, but I have no friend to put me down the steps quickly, so that I may get first into the water. I am always last.'

Jesus was still looking at the man, and He said a strange thing to him.

'Rise, take up your bed and walk!'

Now the man had not been able to walk for years. He had been lying helpless on his mattress for most of his life! But as he looked into Jesus' eyes he knew

perfectly well that he could obey His command. So he stood up, picked up his mattress, and walked!

The man was so astonished at himself that he thought he must be in a dream. He was walking! He was healed! He was as strong and well as the people in the streets outside.

He walked a few steps more in wonder and delight. Then he turned to speak to the amazing man who had told him to get up and walk. But Jesus had gone. He had slipped away in the crowd, and the man could not find Him.

So he went back home through the streets, carrying his mattress, hardly able to believe what had happened to him. Then he suddenly noticed that people were looking at him very angrily. He wondered why.

'Oh, of course — it is the Sabbath day, when no one must work,' remembered the man. 'Carrying a bed is counted as work, and so the people are angry with me for breaking the law!'

Some Jews spoke sternly to him. 'Why do you break the law by carrying your bed on the Sabbath day?'

The man poured out the whole story. 'How can I help it? The man I speak of commanded me to rise up and walk, and I did! I do not know who He

is. He is wonderful. You should have seen the goodness that shone from His eyes!'

The Jews did not care about Jesus' goodness. They were angry because He had told the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath day.

Now when the man went to the Temple that day to thank God for his new happiness, he saw Jesus there. He went up to Him at once in delight.

Jesus looked at him. 'You are healed,' He said. 'Go, and do no more wrong in case a worse thing happens to you.'

The man was so excited at seeing Jesus again that he ran to tell the Jews who had been angry with him. 'There goes the man who healed me!' he said.

These Jews were jealous of Jesus because so many

people loved Him and followed Him. They sent for Him and spoke angrily. 'You know that it is against the law to work on the Sabbath day,' they said.

'God, my Father, does kind deeds on the Sabbath,' said Jesus. 'And so also do I!'

14

The Poor Leper

A MAN went crying from his house. He left behind him his family and all his friends. He must never, never go near them again.

He was a leper. He had caught the terrible disease of leprosy, which ate his body away, and could never be cured. He must not go near anyone again, because if he touched them, they too might get the horrible disease.

'My wife! My children!' wept the poor man. 'I must never see them again. I must go out alone in the countryside, and live with the other poor lepers. I must live as a beggar.'

So he left his home and family, and went to live with the other lepers, lonely and afraid. No one

cared for them, no one went near. If ever a stranger came by, the leper called out mournfully, 'Unclean! Unclean!'

Then the stranger would shiver and hurry away in disgust. He had been near a leper. How terrible!

The poor man was very unhappy. He looked at the white leprosy spots on his body, and hated them. He wanted to be back with his family. He wanted to do his work once more, he wanted to talk and laugh with his friends. But he could never do those things again.

Now one day the leper saw a great crowd in the distance. He wondered what it was and suddenly a thought came into his mind.

He had heard of Jesus, the great healer. Could the crowd have come to be with Jesus? Was that why there were so many people gathered together in excitement? He dared not go near to find out because he was a leper and must never go near anyone.

He waited till the crowd had gone, then he went to where they had stood. Jesus was there. He had been preaching to the people, and healing many of them. The leper gazed at Him, and knew at once that this man with the pitying eyes and beautiful face could be no one else but Jesus.

The leper knew that Jesus could heal him. He must tell Him that He could heal him, if only He would! He went near Jesus and knelt down.

'Sir,' he said, in a beseeching voice, 'you can make me well if only you will!'

Jesus looked down. He saw the poor wretched leper, ugly and marked with leprosy. He did what no one else in the world would have done. He touched him with His hand.

'I will heal you,' He said, in the clear voice that people knew so well. 'You are well again.'

The leper looked down at himself when he heard these marvellous words. He saw his sores healing up. He watched his skin grow clean and whole again. He

'I am healed! I am no longer unclean!'

pulled at his rags to see if his whole body was healed. Yes, it was.

'I am no longer a leper!' said the man, crying for joy. 'I am healed. See, my body is as it was when I was a young man. I am healed! I am no longer unclean!'

Jesus saw the man's happiness, and He was glad. He heard the words that tumbled out of the man's mouth.

'Sir! I can go back to my wife! I can love my children again! I can seek out my friends. I can work and be happy! This is a most wonderful thing you have done!'

Jesus saw that it was so very wonderful to the man that he would most certainly go back at once to his family, and tell his whole town of the miracle that had happened to him.

Jesus did not want him to spread the news abroad so that people would come flocking to Him in their thousands to see what wonders He might do. It was difficult to preach when so many hundreds pressed closer and closer on Him.

'See that you do not tell your news to everyone!' Jesus said to the happy man. 'Go to the priest and show him that you are healed, and then go to your

home. Do not tell everyone you meet what has happened.'

But the man was so happy and so full of wonder that he could not help telling everyone he met.

'Don't shrink away from me!' he shouted. 'I'm not a leper any more. I'm cured. Look, my skin is whole again. Jesus touched me and healed me. I'm just going to the priest.'

The news went round at once. 'The leper is healed! He says Jesus touched him and cured him. He is going back to his family. Did you ever hear of such a wonderful thing?'

The man quite forgot that Jesus had asked him not to spread his news abroad. He told his story over and over again to anyone who would hear him.

'We must go and see this marvellous man!' said everyone, and they flocked round Jesus in such crowds that it was quite impossible for Him to preach to the people of that town.

'We will go into the quiet countryside,' He said to His disciples, and they left this town and went out into the hills.

But the people came to Him even there, and everywhere there was talk of Jesus.

'We must go and see this man Jesus! He is wonderful. Let us go to hear Him. Come, we will go today, and take the children too, because He loves them.'

15

The Man who came down through the Roof

Now, in the city of Capernaum there was a man who was so sick with the palsy that he could not move. He lay on his bed all day long, miserable and worried because he was of no use to himself or to anyone else.

He was grateful to the kind friends that came to see him. They told him the news each day, and brought him little gifts.

The man lay on his bed, unable to do anything but think. He puzzled about his terrible illness.

'Why has God struck me down in this dreadful way?' he wondered. 'Is it a punishment for the wrong things I have done? I am sorry for them now. If only I could have my life over again! I would do as many good deeds as once I did wrong ones. Will God forgive me for all the sins I did? Does He know that I am sorry and ashamed now?'

One day his friends came in to see him as usual to tell him the news that was going round the city.

'There is news today!' said one friend. 'We have heard of a man called Jesus who is a wonderful preacher — and besides that, He can heal sick people.'

'Yes! He has actually healed a leper!' said another man. 'Such a thing has never been known before! Why, all lepers are incurable! And then Jesus touched this man, and he was healed. It's marvellous.'

'Oh, He's done more wonderful things than that!' said another friend. 'He cured a man who had been lying by the Pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years.

Think of that — thirty-eight years — and then Jesus came along and healed him.'

The man with the palsy lay and listened, his eyes on his friends' excited faces. What a story this was to hear!

'It's a pity Jesus couldn't cure *you*,' said one of the friends. 'I wish He could.'

'Tell me more about this man Jesus,' begged the sick man. 'Is He really good? What kind of things does He preach?'

'Oh, He is *really* good,' said the friend. 'He is always preaching that we should be kind to one another. He says, too, that our sins will be forgiven us if we are sorry and really do try to do better.'

The sick man lay and thought about this. He was so worried about the wrong things he had done in his life. 'I have been unjust and unkind and ungenerous,' he thought. 'I wish I could see this man Jesus and ask Him if He thinks God has forgiven me for my wrongdoing. I should feel happier then.'

Not long after that, the man's friends came hurrying into his house, looking excited and pleased.

'Jesus is here! In Capernaum itself! We met somebody who told us so.'

'He's gone to a house not very far off,' said one of the men. 'You should see the crowds! And I heard that very learned men, who know the law from beginning to end, are actually going to hear Him speak today. We're going to see Him.'

'We'll tell you all about it when we come back,' said another friend.

The sick man looked up at them. How he longed to go with them! How he wished he too could walk to where Jesus was and listen to Him! But he couldn't.

'We'll take you with us!' said one friend suddenly. 'There are four of us. We will each take a corner of your mattress, and carry you like that!'

So they did as they said, and each took a mattress

corner. Then, with the sick man between them, they went to find Jesus.

Jesus was already in one of the houses. It was one of many that were built round a big courtyard. Already there were hundreds upon hundreds of people there, pressing into the courtyard, pushing through the gateway, talking excitedly, all anxious for a glimpse of the wonderful preacher.

The four men with the sick man on his bed could not possibly get through the crowds. They set the bed down in despair.

'We can't push through all these people,' said one. 'We'd better go home again.'

The sick man was bitterly disappointed. He looked so despairing that the friends felt as if they must do something. But what could they do?

'I've thought of a plan,' said one at last. 'Let's go up the outside stairs of the house, and get up on to the flat roof. We'll dig a hole in the roof, and let our friend down carefully into the room below.'

'Jesus won't be angry,' said another man. 'They say He is goodness itself.'

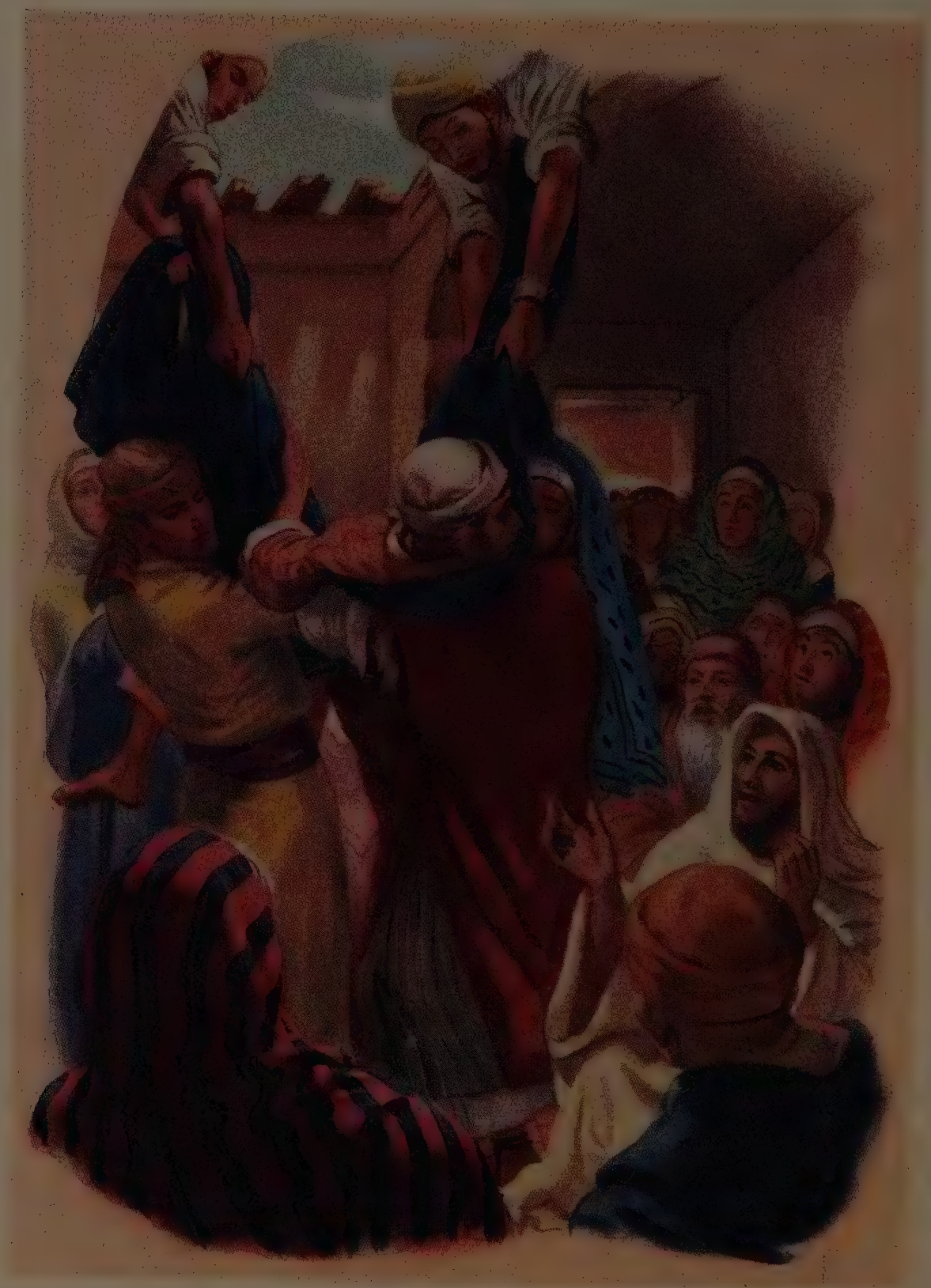
The four friends took the man on his mattress up the steps to the flat roof of the house. Most of these flat roofs were made of hard earth, so it would not be very difficult to dig a hole in this one, if it too was of earth.

'Yes — it is made of hard earth,' said one man, and he began to scrape at the roof. The sick man lay near by and watched eagerly. This was like a dream! Would he really be able to see Jesus?

The four men dug hard at the roof. They made a hole, and they put in their hands and began to break away big pieces. Soon there was a space big enough to let down the man on his bed.

The people in the room below were most astonished. What could be happening? First there was the sound of digging — then a hole appeared — and then bits and pieces began to drop down into the room below.

'Look — what's this coming down now?' said



The man's friends lowered him carefully to the floor below.

someone in alarm. It was the bed swinging down on ropes through the hole with the sick man lying on it. The friends watched anxiously as they lowered the man carefully to the floor below. Then, when he was safely there, they peered through the hole, wondering what would happen to their friend.

The sick man lay on his bed at the feet of Jesus. He looked up at Him. He saw at once that Jesus was wise and good. He could help him. He could tell him if his sins were forgiven him, and could teach him how to be good.

Jesus was surprised at the sudden appearance of the man on the bed. He was touched at the way the four men had helped their friend, and trusted Him to help the poor man too.

Everyone in the room was watching, hardly daring to breathe. Would there be another miracle?

Jesus looked down at the man. He knew at once what it was that he wanted more than anything else.

'Man,' Jesus said, in his grave, clear voice, 'your sins are forgiven you.'

The man sighed with happiness. That was what he wanted to hear, what he had come to ask. He was glad and very grateful.

But there were others there who were not glad to

hear these words. The learned men sat and frowned.

'How dare this man tell the fellow his sins are forgiven him?' they thought. 'Only God can forgive sins.'

Jesus looked round at them. He read their hard thoughts at once.

'What are you thinking?' He asked. 'Tell me, which do you think it is easier to say to a man like this — "Your sins are forgiven you," or "Rise up and walk"? You shall see that I have power to forgive sins, although you think me an ordinary man.'

He looked at the man on the bed. 'Arise, take up your bed and go to your house,' He commanded.

The sick man heard. His eyes shone. He arose, stood steadily on his feet, picked up his bed, and walked!

'See! He who has not walked for years is healed,' whispered the people to one another. 'He has risen, taken his bed, and walked home, as he was bidden. And his sins are forgiven him!'

The four men scrambled off the roof to join their happy friend.

'We have seen strange and wonderful things,' they said in awe. 'Truly this man is the Son of God!'

16

The Soldier and his Servant

THERE was once an officer who lived in Capernaum, and commanded a company of Herod's soldiers there.

He was not a Jew, but he liked Jews and was good to them.

'I will build you a new church in Capernaum,' he told them. 'It shall be a fine church, as fine as I can make it.'

Now one day his favourite servant fell very ill.

He was more like a friend than a servant, and the soldier was grieved when he heard that the doctors could not cure him.

Like everyone else in Capernaum, the officer had heard of Jesus and all His wonderful teachings and miracles.

'I wonder if He could help me,' he thought. 'No, I cannot ask Him, for I am not a Jew. It is the Jews He helps and preaches to. But perhaps if I send to the chief men of the Jewish church I built, *they* might ask Jesus for me. They could tell Him about my beloved servant.'

So he sent a message to the chief men of the church and asked them if they would go to Jesus for him.

They went at once to find Jesus. They were proud that such a rich and important man wanted Jesus.

'We will tell Him how this officer built us our fine church, and what a very important man he is,' they said to one another.

But Jesus did not listen to all their talk of how rich and important the officer was. He heard only two things — that a soldier loved his servant very much, and that he was grieved because the man was ill. Those were the two things that mattered to Jesus.

He set off at once to the soldier's house. But the officer had changed his mind now.

'How can I possibly bother such a great and good man to come all the way to my house?' he thought. 'He has only to say the word, and my servant would be better at once, without even being seen by Jesus! I am troubling Him for nothing. I will send my friends to Jesus and ask Him merely to say the word, and my servant will be better. He must not trouble Himself to come to my house.'

So on the way there Jesus was stopped by a few men, sent by the officer.

'Lord, do not trouble yourself to come further on your way,' they said. 'Our friend has told us to come to you and say that he is not worthy for you to come into his house, neither is he worthy to come to you himself.'

Jesus listened in surprise. The soldier's friends gave Him the rest of the message.

'Lord, he asks you simply to say the word and he is certain that his servant will be healed. Does he not say to his soldiers "Go!" and they go, "Come!" and they come, and to his servant "Do this and do that!"? You, Lord, can do the same, and your word too will be obeyed. Say the word, and our friend's servant will at once be healed.'

Jesus was astonished and very pleased. He spoke to the people who were with Him.

'No one has ever put such trust in me before, not even my own people!'

He turned to the soldier's friends. 'So shall it be. The servant shall be healed!'

The friends hurried back to the house, and there the soldier met them. His eyes shone with joy.

'You gave Jesus my message!' he said. 'And I know He said the word. My servant is healed. He is well again. Come and see!'

'My servant is healed . . . come and see!'

17

The Wonderful Storyteller

'JESUS is here!' the children called to one another on a fine sunny day in Capernaum. 'Let's go and see Him.'

'He shall see my new boat,' said a small boy. 'He will like that.'

'And I shall tell Him about our new little calf,' said another child.

'And I'll tell Him about our little lamb that was lost, and how I found it myself,' said a small girl.

'We'll ask Him to tell us some stories,' the children said. 'He tells wonderful stories. We could listen all day long!'

They went to find Jesus. He always welcomed the children. He would never let His disciples push them away from Him. He liked to hear their voices, and see their smiling faces turned up to Him. Sometimes He sat a child on His knee, and always they slipped their hands into His when they could.

He loved the children, and one and all they loved Him. They were never tired of watching His face and listening to Him as He spoke. Even when He

spoke to the grown-ups He used such simple words, and spoke so clearly and interestingly that the children could still understand.

Jesus knew that the people He spoke to were simple and ignorant. And yet the truths He had to tell were great and wise. How could He tell them these things in a way they would all understand, and even more important, remember?

'I will tell them stories,' said Jesus. 'Everyone likes a story, and if it is well told it is never forgotten. I will put my great truths into stories. If I want to teach people to be kind, I will tell a story of kindness. If I want to show how great a thing love is, I will tell a story about it.'

So He told His stories, and the people listened and remembered. More than that, they retold the stories among themselves, and to their children. These wonderful stories of Jesus have never been forgotten.

We call them parables, because each tale has a meaning to it, a truth in it. You shall hear some of them in this book.

On the day that the children heard that Jesus was in Capernaum they ran with the grown-ups to find Him.

'There He is!' they called. 'Look — coming

They were never tired of listening to Jesus.

down to the lake! What a crowd of people are following Him!'

People always did follow Jesus about, of course, and this morning there were so many people pressing round that Jesus knew He could not possibly talk freely to them. What was He to do?

'Peter!' called Jesus. 'Bring your boat close in to the shore. I will get into it and sit there to speak to the people. Then the water will be between me and the crowds and I can speak to them in comfort.'

Jesus got into Peter's boat, and it pushed off a little way. The people crowded on the shore eagerly. 'He is going to tell some of His stories!' they said to one another.

The children pushed to the front. The sun shone down on their heads, and the blue water of the lake shimmered and sparkled. Behind them were the green hills. Many boats were out on the lake with fishermen in them. But the children did not look at those boats. Their eyes were fixed on Jesus.

'Hush!' they said. 'He is going to begin!'

18

The Story of the Mustard Seed

'I AM going to tell you the story of the mustard seed,' said Jesus, and His clear voice carried across the water to the listening people. 'I want to show you how my kingdom of love can grow from a very tiny beginning, and become a very great thing.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed,' He said. 'You know how small a mustard seed is, one of the tiniest of all our seeds. Now one day a man took a mustard seed and sowed it in his field. It was such a tiny seed that surely only a tiny plant would grow from it!

'But no, it grew strong and tall, till at last it was a great tree that rustled in the wind, and gave shade beneath its leafy branches. The birds came and perched there and sang their songs.

'In the same way my kingdom of love can grow from a very small beginning to something so great that the whole world can share in it!'

That was one of Jesus' very short stories. Even the children could understand that, just as you can. In the land where Jesus lived the mustard seed He

spoke of was not the same as ours — it was tinier and could grow into a tree. The children knew this very well — and so they could understand how the kingdom of love could grow big and strong, just as Jesus said.

19

The Story of the Sower

'ONCE upon a time,' said Jesus, 'a sower went forth to sow. He scattered his seed by hand, some on this side and some on that.

'Now some of the seeds fell on the paths that ran across the field, and there the earth was hard, because the people had trodden it flat. So the seeds lay there and the birds saw these and came down and ate them.

'Some of the seeds fell on stony ground, where there was very little earth. They put out their tiny roots and sent up green shoots. But they could not send their roots down deep because the ground was so stony, and so when the sun came out, the seedlings were scorched and burnt, and very soon they withered away.

'And other seeds fell among thick weeds, and when the seedlings grew the weeds choked them and they died.

'But other seeds fell on good ground, where there were no stones or weeds. They grew up strong and sturdy, waving in the wind. When the farmer came to harvest his field he saw that his seeds had given him thirty, sixty and even a hundred times as much corn as he had scattered on his field, and he was full of joy.'

Now that was one of Jesus' stories. It had a hidden meaning. Do you know what it was?

'I will tell you what my story means,' said Jesus. 'God's word goes out all over the world — we can read it in our Holy Books, we can hear it in our churches, we can listen to it when our teachers tell it to us. It is like the seed in the story, being scattered everywhere.'

'But now listen — there are some people who hear

A sower went forth to sow.

God's word and take little notice of it — they are like the hard ground, where the seed will not grow.

'And some of us listen to God's word for a little while, but as soon as difficulties come, we forget it, and are like the stony ground where the seed grows for a short time and then withers because it has no root.

'And still others have hearts so choked with evil that they are like the weedy ground where the good seed is choked by many weeds.

'But there are many who listen to God's word, and remember it always, doing what good they can, and giving love to others. They are the good ground, where the seeds bring forth thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times more than was sown.'

20

The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep

JESUS often told stories about plants and seeds and sheep and fishermen. Even the children knew about these things, because they watched their fathers sowing seed and harvesting the corn, they helped to mind

the sheep, and they went out in boats to fish with their fathers and uncles and brothers.

Jesus never told stories that were too difficult for the people to understand, and He put into them all the things the people knew so well.

One of the best stories is the story of the shepherd and the lost sheep. Jesus had a reason for telling this tale.

He did not always go about with good people, He often went with bad people, sinners whom the good people disliked. He talked to them and had meals with them. He tried to show them that they should turn from their bad ways and do good. He knew that bad people are often unhappy, and He tried to bring them happiness by turning them to the right.

In this little story Jesus shows that God the Heavenly Father loves even the bad people and tries to save them. You will see how both bad and good people would remember this tale and think of it again and again.

And perhaps they would say: 'Ah, now we understand why Jesus so often speaks to the sinners and goes to their homes. If God Himself loves the sinners, then Jesus is right to love them too, and try to help them. And we should do the same.'

The shepherd will seek for his sheep till he finds it at last.

'Listen to my story,' said Jesus. 'There is a shepherd who has a hundred sheep in his fold. One day a sheep wanders by itself into the hills. There are wolves there, ready to pounce on it and eat it.

'Now, what does the shepherd do? Does he say to himself, "What does the lost sheep matter? I have still ninety-nine left in my fold!"

'No, he does not say that. He leaves his ninety-nine good sheep in their fold, and he goes to look for the little lost one. He will seek for it till he finds it at last. Then he will put it on his shoulder and carry it all the way home, rejoicing.

'And when he gets home he will call in his friends and neighbours, and say, "See, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!"

'And so it is in heaven — there is more joy over one sinner who is brought again into the kingdom of love than there is over the ninety-nine good people safe in the fold.'

Do you think the people would understand after that why Jesus was so anxious to talk to the sinners and to bring them into His kingdom of love?

21

The Tale of the Fisherman

JESUS often spoke about the kingdom of heaven. He put it into many of His stories. Here is one of them. It is the tale of the fisherman.

'Let me tell you about the kingdom of heaven,' said Jesus. 'It is like the net that a fisherman casts into the sea to catch fish. Look, over there is a man casting his net over the side of his boat, just like the fisherman in my story.

'When the net was heavy with fish the fisherman and his friends pulled it in. They took the net on

board their ship, and they rowed to shore to sort out their catch.

'They meant to keep the good fish but not the bad ones. They took the good fish and put them into baskets, but they threw away the bad ones, because they did not want them.

'And this is how it will be when the end of the world comes. The angels shall come forth and gather the good people, and take them into heaven, but the bad ones shall be thrown away for ever.'

22

The Boy who left Home

'JESUS has some strange friends,' the people sometimes said to one another. 'He does not always go with good men and women, as surely a good man should.'

Jesus heard what they said. He was sad. Did the people still not know that God had love even for sinners and was grieved to know that they had wandered far away from the kingdom of heaven, far away from

His love? Did they not see that He too must love sinners and go to try and bring them back to God again?

'I will tell them another story,' thought Jesus. 'There shall be three people in my story — a good son, a bad son, and a father who loves them both.'

And so He told the listening crowd this story, which is one of the loveliest He ever imagined.

There was once a rich man who had two sons. The boys had everything they wanted — good clothes to wear, fine food to eat, money to spend, and servants to wait on them.

But the younger son soon grew bored with his life on the farm. 'I want to go to the town and spend my money there,' he said to his father. 'There is nothing to do here and life is very dull.'

He was so bored that he would not work. He was idle and bad-tempered, and made his father sad. He laughed at his elder brother, who worked hard and did all that his father told him.

One day the younger son went to his father.

'Father,' he said, 'let me go away. Give me my share of the money, and I will go to the city and live there. You have my brother to work for you. Let me go.'

The father was sad. He gave his younger son his share of the money, and said good-bye to him. The younger son was pleased and excited. He set off in his finest clothes, singing, thinking of all the money he had with him. What a fine time he would have!

He came to the town and looked for lodgings. As soon as the people saw that he had plenty of money they came round him at once. He was pleased to see that he had so many friends. Ah, this was a fine life — he could give parties every day if he wanted to, he could buy himself the grandest clothes in town, and could eat and drink from morning to night.

But alas! — money does not last for ever. One day the boy found that he had none left — and when his money went, his fine friends melted away too.

They had only come round him because he was rich.

The youth was in a far country, where he knew nobody. What was he to do?

'I must get some work,' he thought. 'I shall starve if I do not earn money to buy food.'

But it was hard to get work. He had always been idle and he did not know how to work hard. To make things worse a great famine came to that land, and there was very little food. Most people were hungry, and a good many of them were starving.

'I am faint with hunger,' said the youth. 'I have never felt like this before. Somehow I must find work to do!'

At last he found a task. 'You can look after my

herd of pigs,' said a farmer. So the boy sat under a tree, watching the grunting, greedy pigs.

'I am so hungry that I could eat the empty pods and husks that are thrown to these pigs,' he thought. 'How foolish I have been! Why, in my father's house even the very lowliest servant gets enough bread to eat — and here am I envying the pigs their husks!'

He sat and thought of his father's house and the busy, well-kept farm. He remembered the feasts his father had given, the fine clothes he had worn, the friends he had had, and the great kindness his father had always shown him.

He was very homesick and very lonely. He told the farmer he could no longer watch his herd of pigs.

'I shall go home!' he said to himself. 'I am sorry and ashamed. I will go to my father and I will say to him: "Father, I have done wrong in God's sight and in yours too, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your servants and I will work hard for you."'

He walked many many miles to get back to his home. He was foot-sore and very tired. He was dirty and his clothes were in rags. He looked very different from the happy, finely dressed youth who had ridden away from the farm the year before.

His father had not forgotten him. Each day he had thought of him and prayed for him. He had looked for a letter from him but none had come. Every night the old man wondered what his lost son was doing, and whether he was happy or not.

Often he climbed up to the flat roof of his house just to see if by any chance the boy was coming home. 'If he is a mile away I shall still know him!' thought the father.

And then one day he saw someone in the distance that reminded him of his son. But no, surely this poor, ragged, miserable youth was not his beloved son!

'It *is* my son,' said the old man, at last, and he ran with great joy to meet him. All the way he ran, and took him in his arms and kissed him.

'Oh, my father!' said the son in great happiness. 'Father, I have done wrong in God's sight and in yours, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

The old man did not let him say any more. He called to his servants.

'Get the best clothes we have in the house, and put them on my son,' he said. 'Get a ring for his finger too, and shoes for his feet. We will have a great

'It is my son,' said the old man, and he ran with joy to meet him.

feast tonight, so fetch the calf that is being fattened, and kill it for our supper. We will eat and be merry, for this son of mine who I thought was dead is alive again; he was lost, but now he is found.'

The youth was almost in tears. Everyone welcomed him, everyone was kind to him. How could he ever have been so foolish as to leave his home and family?

But wait — there was one person who was not pleased to see him back. The elder son was angry to hear that his younger brother had come home again and was being feasted and welcomed. He would not go to the feast.

He spoke angrily to his father. 'Have I not worked for you all these years and obeyed you in everything?' he said. 'But you did not give me a feast!'

'Son, you have been always with me, sharing in all the good things I can give you,' said the father, gently. 'You have lacked for nothing. It is right that we should welcome your brother, and rejoice. We thought him dead, but he is alive; he was lost, but now he is found. We must make merry and be glad!'

23

The Tale of the Good Samaritan

THIS is a tale of great kindness. It is one of the best of all the tales that Jesus told. He was always preaching kindness and love, and in this story He tells us of a kind and good man.

Once upon a time there was a man who had to travel along a lonely way through the mountains, on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Jericho.

As he went along, robbers saw him. They had their hiding-place among the rocks, where they waited for lonely travellers to come by. They pounced upon the man and caught him.

He shouted for help. He struggled and tried to beat them off, but there were too many for him.

'Take his money, his goods — and his clothes, too,' said the chief of the robbers. They hit the poor man again and then left him, carrying off his clothes as well as his money.

The man was too badly hurt to walk. He could only lie by the roadway, groaning in pain. 'My head is bleeding!' he moaned. 'I shall die if I am left here without help. If only someone would come by!'

At last he heard the sound of feet. The wounded man lifted his head and saw to his joy that it was a priest of God who was coming by. 'Help!' he cried, feebly, 'Help!'

The priest saw the man. He did not go to look at him. He crossed to the other side of the road and went on his way. The wounded man could hardly believe that anyone could be so cruel.

Then someone else came by. This time it was a Levite, a man often in the Holy Temple, who worshipped God and prayed to Him. Ah, he would surely help!

The Levite went to look at the wounded man. He saw that he had hardly any clothes and that he had been robbed and wounded. But he did not help

the man at all. He was not going to bother himself! He went calmly on his way and forgot all about the wounded traveller.

At last the man heard footsteps once more. He saw a man from Samaria, a Samaritan. The wounded man was disappointed.

'I have always heard that the Samaritans are mean and selfish,' he thought. 'Why, the priests and the Levites think themselves better than the Samaritans, and would not even sleep in the same house with one of them. This Samaritan will not think of helping me.'

Now the Samaritan was riding on a little donkey, his eyes on the road ahead. He suddenly saw the man lying by the roadside.

He rode right up to him. He saw at once that the man was badly hurt, and had been lying by the road for a long time.

'Poor fellow!' thought the Samaritan. 'Robbers have set upon him and robbed him. They have beaten him cruelly. I must do something for him. What can I put on his wounds?'

In his luggage, strapped on the donkey's back, were some bottles of oil and wine. The Samaritan got them and rubbed some on the man's wounds as

The good Samaritan helped the wounded man on to his donkey.

gently as he could. Then he bound them up with strips of clean cloth.

'Do you feel better now?' he asked the man. 'Can you walk to my donkey if I help you? You shall ride him, and I will hold you on as I walk beside you.'

The wounded man managed to get on the donkey's back. The Samaritan clicked to the little beast and he moved off. The Samaritan had to hold the man firmly on the donkey, because he was so weak from his wounds.

But he was happy again. He kept looking in wonder at the Samaritan. How good to know that there was such kindness in the world! How marvellous to find someone so full of pity and mercy! The man could hardly believe it.

They came to a roadside inn. The Samaritan called to the inn-keeper.

'Have you a good room and bed for this poor fellow? And have you any clothes? I will look after him tonight. I must bathe his wounds again and see that he has a good meal.'

He put the man to bed and looked after him. In the morning the wounded traveller felt much better. The Samaritan went to the inn-keeper.

'I cannot stay longer,' he said, 'or I would see to this man. You must look after him for me. Here is some money. Take care of him till he is better and can go home.'

'Yes, sir. You can trust me to do that,' said the inn-keeper.

'If you have to spend more than I have given you I will repay you when I come back this way again,' said the Samaritan. He said good-bye to the traveller, mounted his little donkey and went on his way.

'Now,' said Jesus, when He had finished telling this story, 'who can tell me which of the three travellers — the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan — was a kind and good neighbour to the man who fell among thieves?'

I shall not tell you the answer. I am sure you know it yourself, and will always be a kind and good neighbour to anyone in trouble.

24

Jesus in the Storm

ONE evening, after Jesus had been telling the people many many stories, He was tired.

'Master, you must rest,' said Peter. 'Leave the people now and rest yourself.'

Jesus had been sitting in the boat, talking from there to the people. They could not press against Him if He sat a little way out on the water, and they could hear His voice clearly, and see Him as He talked.

Jesus looked at the crowds on the shore. 'If we land there, the people will follow us, and we shall get no rest,' He said. 'Let us take the boat to the other side of the lake. When the people see us sailing away they will all go home.'

So Peter headed the little fishing-boat out on the open water. Jesus lay down. He was very tired indeed. He could not keep His eyes open. He rested His head on a cushion and fell fast asleep.

The boat moved over the water, and the waves splashed against the sides. The boat bobbed a little, but Jesus slept on.

'Do not wake Him,' said Peter, in a low voice. 'He is so tired.'

So they let the boat sail on gently, and watched the sleeping Jesus. But suddenly Peter grew anxious.

'Look!' he said. 'See that great black cloud coming up! And feel the wind — it's blowing up more and more strongly.'

'It's one of the storms that blow up so quickly on our lake,' said another disciple. 'We should not be so far out, Peter! See how high the waves are rising. Our boat will be overturned.'

'It's getting dark too,' said Peter, even more anxious. 'Why did we come out so far? Hark at the wind! It is howling already — and that big black cloud has completely covered the sky.'

The boat began to rock dangerously. To and fro it went, tipping over almost to the water. The waves rose very high, and spray blew over the disciples, and over the sleeping Jesus.

'He must be very very tired not to wake with all this wind and tossing about,' said Peter. 'And see — a wave splashed over Him then and He did not move. The boat will soon be full of water!'

The disciples trembled with fear as the boat rocked more and more, filling with water from the

'Peace, be still!'

waves that splashed over the side. 'Wake Jesus,' they said to Peter. 'Do you want us to be drowned?'

Peter bent over Jesus. He shook Him by the shoulder and shouted in His ear above the sound of the wind and the waves. 'Master, awake! Master, save us!'

Jesus awoke suddenly. He sat up and saw how dark it was, and heard how the wind howled. Spray whipped against His face, and the boat rocked badly.

He stood up in the rocking boat, and the disciples heard His clear, commanding voice.

'Peace, be still!' Jesus said to the wind and the waves. Then the wind dropped at once and ceased its howling, and the waves died down so that the boat no longer rocked. A great calm came over the lake.

The disciples watched in the greatest awe. Jesus turned to them.

'Why are you so frightened?' He said. 'Do you not trust me even yet?'

The disciples said nothing. They gazed at their Master, filled with wonder, marvelling at this man who had suddenly calmed the storm.

'What manner of man is this?' they said to one another. 'Even the wind and the waves obey Him!'

25

The Poor Madman

THE disciples spent the night in the boat with Jesus. When morning dawned, it was a lovely day.

'Sail over to the other side of the lake,' said Jesus. 'I must rest and pray.'

So the boat sailed away, and came to the other side of the lake to the place where the Gadarenes lived.

'We will go up into the hills,' said Jesus when they had moored the boat, and they climbed up the lonely hillside, talking together.

And then a very frightening thing happened. Out of a cave rushed a dreadful man, shouting and yelling, shaking his fist in rage. He wore no clothes, he had let his hair and beard grow long, and he looked very fierce indeed.

He was a poor madman that everyone was afraid of. He was very strong and very fierce, and even when he had been tied with ropes and chains he had broken them and got loose again. He was as strong as a giant when he was in one of his rages.

He lived in a horrible cave, and lay in wait for people to come by. Then he would rush out at them

and terrify them. He was a mad, bad, unhappy man, hated and feared by everyone.

He rushed out at the disciples, yelling and howling. All at once he caught sight of Jesus. He stopped shouting and gazed at Him. He had never seen a man look pityingly and kindly at him before. He rushed to Jesus, and the disciples moved closer in case he should try to hurt their Master.

But the madman fell at His feet and tried to take hold of His ankles. The disciples moved away in disgust. What a horrible fellow—and how dangerous!

Jesus did not move away. He looked down with great compassion in His eyes. Poor, muddled madman, troubled and unhappy! Jesus was not disgusted or afraid. He looked into the wild face of the

madman and spoke to him in the voice that made everyone listen.

'What is your name?' He said.

'My name!' cried the man wildly. 'I have a thousand names, for there are a thousand bad devils inside me, they make me do bad things, they make me wicked! I have as many names as I have devils in me!'

'Then I will take away those thousand devils,' said Jesus, calmly, and His voice quietened the wild, excited man. 'They shall all leave you, and you shall find yourself again.'

The madman listened, his eyes on the grave, steady face above him. He saw love and pity and wise understanding there, things he had not seen for years. His wild, unhappy soul drank in the love and pity. He suddenly grew quiet and stopped shaking. His mind cleared and he could think again, clearly and sensibly. His madness left him — he was himself again!

The man stood up. He gazed at Jesus with the greatest love and devotion. Who was this wonderful man who had done this to him? How he worshipped Him! He seemed like God Himself to the hairy, ugly man from the caves.

He looked down at himself and was horrified to see that he was so dirty and had no clothes on.

'Take my cloak,' said one of the disciples, kindly, and the man wrapped himself in it.

He would not leave Jesus. He sat at His feet all day long, listening to Him. Someone had cared enough to be kind to him, someone had had enough love to make him better! The poor man could hardly believe it.

'I will never leave you,' he said to Jesus.

But Jesus shook His head and said, 'If you really love me and want to do something for me, stay here with your own people and tell them what has happened to you. Tell them what you have heard me say. Then if I come here again I shall find the people ready to listen to me.'

And so the man stayed behind when Jesus sailed away in the boat, sad to see Him go, but glad that he could do something, however small, to show how much he loved the man who had healed him of his madness.

26

A Blind Man is Made Happy

THERE was once a blind man called Bartimaeus. Each day he made his way stumblingly to the roadside, and sat there, hoping for a little kindness from the passers-by.

He sat on the road near the big town of Jericho. Many beggars sat there with him, because so many people passed in and out of Jericho, and always there were a few who threw coins or bread to the poor beggars.

Bartimaeus had his place with the others. He envied them because they could see and he could not. He could only hear the footsteps of the passers-by, he

could not see the people going to and fro. He lived in a world of darkness.

When he heard footsteps, he would call out loudly :

'Have pity on a poor blind beggar ! Have pity, and spare a little money for one who cannot work ! Have pity on one who lives in darkness and cannot see the light !'

Some passers-by were full of pity for the blind man and pressed a coin into his outstretched hand. They knew he could not work, so they helped him a little.

Now one day Bartimaeus was sitting by the road-side as usual when he thought he heard more footsteps than he had ever heard before.

'There must be quite a crowd of people hurrying by !' he thought. 'Why, there must be hundreds of people this morning. Where are they going ?'

He listened again. 'Yes, there are crowds of people about today. How I wish I could see them ! What is the matter, I wonder ? Why are there so many ?'

At last Bartimaeus felt that he really must find out what all the excitement was about. So he called out loudly.

'Won't somebody tell me what is going on ! I'm

blind, I can't see. What is the excitement about? Why are there so many people this morning?'

'Oh, haven't you heard?' answered someone. 'It's Jesus of Nazareth! He's passing here this morning and we're all watching for Him. He'll soon be here.'

'Jesus of Nazareth!' said Bartimaeus. 'Think of that! He's the great healer, the one who makes sick people better. He's coming by here — where I'm sitting! If only He would see me! Jesus of Nazareth, they said. It's too good to be true.'

He heard more and more footsteps. He heard the excited cries of the crowds. He heard what they said.

'Jesus has come! Look, there He is, walking with His friends.'

Bartimaeus listened. Jesus must be very near. If only he could *see* — but he was blind, he could see nothing.

Bartimaeus could keep silent no longer. He raised his voice and shouted. He shouted more loudly than he had ever shouted before: 'Jesus, have pity on me! Jesus, have pity on me!'

'Bartimaeus, be quiet,' said the people. 'How can you make such a terrible noise?'

Bartimaeus took no notice. He went on shouting:

'JESUS, HAVE PITY ON ME!'

'Jesus, have pity on me!' called Bartimaeus.

Everyone near by was angry to think that a blind beggar should make such a noise. They shouted at him, ordering him to be quiet.

'JESUS, HAVE PITY ON ME!' called Bartimaeus again and again.

Jesus heard the loud, urgent voice. He stopped at once. He saw the blind man sitting by the wayside.

'Bring him here to me,' said Jesus. The people ran to Bartimaeus at once.

'Get up, fellow! Jesus has sent for you,' they told him.

Bartimaeus trembled for joy. He stood up and stretched out his hands to feel his way to Jesus. He was guided right up to Him.

Jesus looked at the blind man with compassion. 'What do you want of me?' He asked gently.

'Lord, if only I could see!' said Bartimaeus.

Jesus put out His hand and touched the man's blind eyes. Bartimaeus stood still, hardly believing what had happened to him.

He could see! The darkness had fled. He was in the golden sunshine. He could see colours and light. And he could see the beautiful face of the man who had taken him out of his darkness. He could see Jesus of Nazareth!

He shouted and sang for joy. He leapt about and cried out his happiness. He could not believe his good fortune. Jesus of Nazareth had come by! Jesus of Nazareth had stopped for him!

He followed Jesus all day long, telling the crowds of the miracle. They were glad for him and rejoiced with him.

But the happiest of all was Bartimaeus himself.

27

The Little Daughter of Jairus

A LITTLE girl was watching for her father to come home. She lived at Capernaum, the town where Jesus often came.

'Where are you, Anna?' called her mother. The dark-eyed, dark-haired child called back: 'I am waiting for my father. He will play with me when he comes.'

Anna was twelve years old, an only child, and her parents loved her with all their hearts. She went everywhere with them, and they were very proud of her.

Each day when Jairus, her father, came home they played a game together. Anna always looked forward to that. Now she was watching for him as usual.

'Here he is!' she cried, and ran to meet the big man whose eyes and hair were so like hers. They played their game and the mother heard them laughing and talking happily in the evening sunshine. She smiled happily too.

But none of them smiled the next day. Anna fell ill. 'My head is hot,' she said. 'It hurts. I don't want anything to eat. I don't want to play.'

Her father was suddenly anxious. 'Wife, the child looks really ill,' he said. 'Put her to bed. I will send for the doctor.'

So Anna was put to bed. She tossed restlessly

from side to side. The doctor came and left her some medicine.

'She is no better,' said the mother that evening. 'I am afraid she is worse. We will send for the doctor again.'

The doctor was alarmed when he came. 'I will get another doctor,' he said. 'The child is very ill. Perhaps a second doctor can help.'

But in a day or two it was plain that Anna was desperately ill. Her father was in despair.

'She is my only child,' he kept thinking, 'my dear beloved little Anna. What can I do for her? The doctor has given her up. He can do nothing. I cannot let her die!'

He sat by the child's bedside and watched her. He looked at his anxious wife, pale and sad.

'Have you heard of this new healer, the man called Jesus?' he said suddenly. 'I've been thinking about Him. I think He is here, in the town.'

'Go and fetch Him,' said his wife at once. 'He might come and lay His hand on our child and make her well. Go now, Jairus, before it is too late.'

'I will go and ask where I can find Him,' said Jairus. 'He is a good man and He loves little children. Surely He would come to our little Anna.'

Jairus stroked his little girl's hair and went quietly out of the room. He made his way into the town and asked people anxiously where he could find Jesus. He went to the house where Jesus stayed — but alas, He was not there!

'Go down to the lakeside,' said the woman who opened the door to him. 'He may be preaching there.'

So Jairus went down to the blue water, and there he saw a great crowd of people. 'Surely Jesus must be here,' he thought gladly.

He pressed through the crowd. 'Is Jesus here?' he asked. 'Where is He?'

'No, He is not here,' said someone. 'He was with us only last night, telling us stories from Peter's boat. Then He sailed off over the lake. A storm blew up when it was dark and we hope Jesus is safe. We are waiting for the boat to come back.'

'Will He be long?' said Jairus, in despair. Nobody knew.

'You can only wait,' said a woman near by, sorry for this man who looked so worried. So Jairus stood with the people and waited, straining his eyes to see across the lake. He thought of Anna, lying so ill. Was she still alive? Every minute mattered now. If only Jesus would come!

'There's a boat now,' said somebody, and Jairus sighed with relief. But it was not Peter's boat. It was someone else's. Jairus's heart sank.

After a little while somebody shouted: 'I can see the boat. Look, over there! Jesus is coming!'

Peter's boat sailed swiftly over the lake. Jairus could see a man standing in it. Yes, it was Jesus Himself. The boat ran into shore, and willing hands helped to pull it in. Jesus sprang to the beach, and the disciples tried to keep back the people crowding round Him.

Jesus did not land near Jairus, who had to push through the crowd. 'Let me through,' he begged everyone. 'Do let me through.'

The crowd opened to let him pass. They saw that he had something urgent to say to Jesus. Jairus

knelt down in front of Jesus and begged Him to come and see his little girl.

'She is at the point of death,' said Jairus, his voice trembling. 'I pray you, Lord, come and put your hands on her that she may be healed. Then she will live.'

Jesus saw that Jairus was desperate. 'I will come at once,' He said. 'Let us go.'

Everyone had been listening to what Jairus had said. 'He's going to see the little girl,' they said to one another. 'Little Anna, you know. He'll do something wonderful! We must go and see.'

28

The Woman in the Crowd

THE crowd jostled and pressed round Jesus and the disciples as they went with Jairus. They were excited, and every moment more and more people came to join them.

Now, in the crowd, there was a poor, miserable woman. She was ill with a disease that no doctor

seemed able to cure. For twelve years she had spent all her money on doctors, and now she was worse.

She had heard of Jesus, of course. 'I would never dare to speak to Him, or ask Him to heal me,' she thought. 'But suppose, in the crowd, I got near enough just to touch the hem of His robe or even the tassel on His cloak — why, that would be enough to make me well again. He is so good and so kind — yes, just to touch His cloak would heal me!'

So, as Jesus was walking along with Jairus, this woman made her way nearer and nearer to Him in the crowd. At last she was just behind Him. With a beating heart she put out her hand and touched the bottom of His cloak.

No sooner had she touched it than she felt herself healed! Her body felt different. It was suddenly strong and healthy. The woman was overcome with joy and wonder. Now she must get away quickly and think of the marvellous thing that had happened to her.

But before she could go, Jesus stopped and looked round. 'Who touched me?' He said.

'I didn't, Master,' said one near by. 'Nor did I,' said another. Peter was astonished at his Master's question.

'Master, what do you mean, *who touched you*?' said

The woman came forward and knelt down, trembling.

he. 'Look at the crowd round you, jostling against you all the time! Many people must have touched you.'

But Jesus knew quite well that someone had touched Him on purpose, because He had felt goodness going out of Him as always happened when He healed someone. Some person had wanted His help, and had got it without even asking for it. Who was it?

Jairus did not want to stop. 'Oh, hurry, hurry!' he thought. 'There is so little time to be lost.'

The woman in the crowd felt that Jesus was looking at her. She came forward and knelt down, trembling. She told Him of the disease she had had.

'I knew that if I touched but the hem of your cloak I should be healed,' she said. 'And it was so.'

'Daughter,' said Jesus, gently, 'because you trusted me so much, you were healed. Go in peace.'

As the woman was slipping through the crowd Jairus suddenly saw messengers pushing their way through the people. 'Where is Jairus?' they asked. 'We want Jairus.'

Jairus felt his heart go cold, for the faces of the messengers were grave and sad. 'Sir,' said one, 'do not trouble the Master now. Your little girl is dead.'

Jairus turned in despair to Jesus, tears in his eyes. It was too late after all!

Jesus spoke comfortingly to him. 'Don't be afraid. Only believe in me.'

He walked on with Jairus, and the crowd followed. When He came near the house Jesus turned and spoke to the people.

'Come no farther,' He said. Then, taking James and Peter and John with him, He went into the house with Jairus.

As soon as they were inside they heard a great noise of weeping and wailing and doleful singing and chanting. In those days when anyone died people were paid to come and wail for the dead, and already they were wailing for little Anna.

Jesus could not bear this noise. He knew that the people there had been paid to weep and wail, they were not weeping from their hearts for Anna. It was all make-believe, and Jesus did not like that.

'Why do you make this noise?' Jesus said to the weeping women. 'The little girl is not dead. She is asleep.'

Then they all laughed at Him, for they had seen that the child was dead. Jesus sent them all away, and then He followed Jairus into the room where Anna lay. His disciples went with Him, and they walked softly to the bed where the child lay so still.

Jesus put out His hand and took Anna's in His.

The mother was there, weeping bitterly. 'You were too late, Jairus,' she sobbed. 'You did not even say good-bye to her, our poor little Anna.'

Jairus looked at her in despair, and then turned to Jesus. No one but Jesus could do anything now.

Jesus stood by the bed, looking at the child who lay so still, her eyes closed, and her cheeks pale.

He put out His hand and took Anna's in His. He held it firmly in His warm one.

'Get up, darling,' he said.

Anna opened her eyes. She sat up, looking all round. She was surprised to see so many men round her bed. She smiled at her father. Then she got up from her bed and walked a few steps in the room.

Her mother and father could hardly believe their eyes. 'Anna!' said her mother. 'My little Anna!'

And in a moment she was in the arms of her father and mother. They kissed her and fondled her, crying for joy. She was alive again! She was laughing and talking just as usual!

Jesus watched them with gladness. It was always good to see love and happiness and He was glad that He could bring so much.

'Tell no one of this,' He said to Jairus. Then He turned to Anna's mother. She was quite beside

herself with joy. Jesus knew that He must give her something to do for her child.

'Give Anna something to eat,' He said, and the mother went gladly to fetch some food.

Jesus went from the house with His disciples, leaving behind a very happy family.

'I want to see that man again,' said Anna, to her parents. 'He is kind. I like Him.'

And so, when Jesus visited Capernaum, and the children came round Him as they always did, little Anna was always there, waiting. She listened to His stories, gazing up into His clear, steadfast eyes. She would do anything in the world for Jesus!

29

The Boy with the Loaves and the Fishes

THERE was once a small boy who lived up in the hills that rose above the Lake of Galilee. He lived in a little white house with his mother and father and

small sister. He was quite an ordinary little boy, who didn't dream that one day something wonderful was going to happen to him.

He helped his father on the hills, and he fetched water for his mother and sometimes looked after his little sister. Often he went fishing by himself, catching the fish in his hands, for he had no net.

One day he caught two little fish, and he was very proud of himself. He took them to his mother.

'Will you pickle these for me?' he asked her. She smiled at him.

'Yes, I will pickle them for you,' she said. 'And you shall eat them tomorrow. There will only be enough for you because they are so small.'

So she pickled the two little fish and put them aside for the boy.

Now the next day the little boy was out on the hills with his small sister when he suddenly saw a great many people. They were streaming along the roads that led to the country round about the village of Bethsaida. The little boy had never seen so many people in the hills before.

He was astonished. Where had they all come from? And why were they there? Had something happened?

'I'm going to ask what's happened,' the boy told his sister. 'Stay here till I come back. What hundreds of people there are!'

He ran off to the crowds. 'What's happened?' he asked. 'Why have you all come here? There is nobody about here usually, except the villagers.'

'We're looking for Jesus,' said a woman. 'He set off in His boat across the lake with His disciples. So we've walked round the lake to find Him. He must be somewhere here. Have you seen Him?'

'Who is Jesus?' asked the little boy.

'Oh, haven't you heard of Him?' said another boy. 'He's a wonderful man. He can do miracles and wonders! He can, really! He makes sick people

well again and He can even make dead people alive. And there's another thing — He can tell the most marvellous stories. That's why *I've* come today. I love stories.'

'So do I,' said the boy from the hills. 'I wish I could see this wonderful man and hear His stories. I think I'll go and ask my mother if I may.'

He ran off home, and rushed into the house so fast that his mother looked up in surprise.

'Mother! Have you heard of a man called Jesus?' panted the boy. 'He's somewhere in the hills near by today. You should see the crowds that have come to hear Him! Mother, may I go and hear Him too? He tells stories and does miracles. I do so want to see Him.'

'Very well,' said his mother, smiling at the excited little boy. 'Just wait a minute, though, and let me pack you up some food to take with you. Look, here are five little loaves you can have — and wouldn't you like to take the two little fish you caught yesterday, that I have pickled for you?'

The boy could hardly wait for his mother to put his food into a small basket. He took it from her, said good-bye and ran off quickly.

The crowds were even bigger when he got up to

them. 'Is Jesus here?' he asked, anxiously. 'I haven't missed Him, have I?'

'He's over on that grassy hillside,' said a man. 'His disciples are with Him.'

Yes, Jesus was there. He had really come to these hills for a rest, because He was tired. But when He saw the crowds streaming along, He was sorry for them. 'They are like sheep without a shepherd,' He said to His disciples, and He went to meet the people.

The little boy suddenly saw Him. He knew without a doubt that it was Jesus. He had never seen such clear, steady eyes before, such a wonderful face, or heard such a voice. So that was Jesus, the man of wonders and miracles! The little boy took a deep breath, and gazed at Him in awe and wonder.

If only he could do something for this man! He was a hero to the little boy. If only Jesus would look at him and smile at him! But Jesus had so many people to see to, so much to do, that He didn't even look in the small boy's direction.

The disciples went here and there among the crowds, looking for sick, lame or blind people to bring to Jesus. The little boy saw them taken to Him, saw Him put His hands on them, and talk to them.

Jesus went among the crowd, talking and healing.

And behold they were well again, they could see, they could walk and run! They broke into shouts and songs of joy, and went down the hill, praising God and telling everyone what had happened to them.

Then Jesus sat down and began to preach. The little boy listened. Jesus told some of His stories, and the lad strained his ears so that he should not miss a word.

'What wonderful stories!' he thought. 'I can understand them all! I shall remember each one, and tell them to my mother and my little sister. They will love them.'

Jesus left His seat on the grassy hillside and went among the crowd, talking and healing once more. The boy followed Him at a distance, never losing sight of Him. What a wonderful day this was — so many people, so much to see — and this marvellous man in the middle of it all!

The boy had forgotten all about the food in the little basket his mother had given him. Usually he was very hungry and ate everything far too soon when he came out for the day. But today he had forgotten even to eat.

The day went by and the sun began to sink. Hundreds of people were still there in the hills, excited

and happy. But they were beginning to get tired now, and most of them were very hungry, for they had not brought any food with them. They had walked a very long way, and now that they were hungry they wondered if there was anywhere to buy food. But there were no shops in the hills.

The disciples went to Jesus. 'Master,' they said, 'shall we send these people away and tell them to go into the villages and buy bread?'

'We must feed them,' said Jesus.

'But Master — it would cost more than two hundred shillings to buy food for so many,' said Philip, who was in charge of the money that the disciples had. 'Do you wish us to go and buy food for the crowds?'

'Has no one here any food?' said Jesus. 'Go and see.' So the disciples went round the hillside, asking the same question over and over again.

'Has anyone food here? Who has brought food? Has anyone food here?'

But the people shook their heads. Either they had eaten what little they had brought, or they had forgotten to bring any in their excitement.

'Has anyone food here?' came the voices of the disciples, and the little boy heard the question too.

He suddenly remembered the basket of food he had brought — the five little loaves and the two small fishes. He unwrapped them from the cloth in the basket and looked at them.

'I would so much like to give them to Jesus,' thought the small boy. 'I do so want to do something for Him, even if it's only a small thing. But would I dare to give these loaves and fishes to the disciples?'

He suddenly made up his mind. Yes, he would at least offer his food. So he pushed his way through the crowd and went up to one of the disciples.

'I have a little bread,' he said. 'And look, there are two small fishes as well. You can have them.'

The disciple took the basket, and led the boy up to Jesus.

'Master,' he said, 'there is a lad here with five loaves and two fishes.'

The boy was delighted to be so near the wonderful man he had been watching all the day. He looked up at Him shyly, his eyes wide with pleasure. Jesus smiled at him and took the basket from the disciple.

'Tell the people to sit down in companies of fifty so that we may feed them easily,' He said to His disciples. The people obeyed, sitting down in big groups. The little boy watched in wonder. What was Jesus going to do?

Jesus took the five loaves from the basket and broke them. He looked up to heaven and blessed the bread He had broken. He gave it to His disciples. Then He divided the little fish and gave those to them as well.

The disciples came up one by one to get the food, and to the little boy's wonder and amazement, Jesus always had plenty for them.

He went on breaking up the bread and the fishes, giving out more and more, and the disciples came up time and again for another share to give to the hungry people.

'There is no end to my bread and fishes!' thought the little boy. 'How can so little become so much?

Jesus blessed the bread He had broken.

This is a miracle I am watching. Jesus is doing a miracle with my five little loaves and two little fishes !'

There were five thousand people sitting on the hills and they were all fed. The disciples sat down to eat at last, and Jesus sat too, with the small boy beside Him eating his own share, marvelling at every mouthful he took.

'Master,' said the boy, shyly. 'I caught these fishes. And my mother baked the bread.'

'I am glad you brought them and gave them to me,' said Jesus, smiling at the small boy.

When everyone had eaten what they wanted, Jesus called His disciples and told them to go round and pick up all the scraps.

Nothing must be left to litter the lovely hillside and spoil it. The little boy went with the disciples, filling his own small basket with the scraps of bread and fish thrown down on the grass.

He looked at the baskets that were filled and counted them. 'Twelve !' he said. 'Twelve baskets full of scraps. And yet I only brought my own small basketful. Truly this is a very wonderful miracle. What will my mother say ?'

It was time for everyone to go home. The sun had set and soon it would be very dark. Jesus was

in need of rest, and He wanted to pray to His Heavenly Father. He went silently into the hills alone.

The boy watched Him go. He had seen Jesus. He had listened to His stories. He had helped Him by giving Him his food. Jesus had smiled at him and spoken to him. He was the happiest boy in the world!

Now he must tell his mother all about it. She would hardly believe him! He ran up the hilly paths, panting. He was tired but very happy.

He came to his house at last. His mother was anxiously looking out for him. He flung himself on her.

'Mother, I saw Him! I saw Jesus! And do you know what happened to the five little loaves you baked, and the two fishes you pickled for me? Jesus took them and broke them and blessed them — and Mother, there was enough to feed five thousand people! I saw a miracle done with my own bread and fishes!'

He told the wonderful story over and over again. 'I shall never forget this day,' he said. 'It's been the greatest day of my life!'

30

Judas the Traitor

JUDAS was one of the disciples of Jesus. He was clever, and the others trusted him to do many things for them.

'You can go and bargain in the town for the food we need,' they said to Judas. 'We have very little money and you can make the best of what we have. You are good at dealing with money and keeping account of it.'

Judas was a strange man. Although he was one of the disciples, he did not love Jesus. The only person he really loved was himself.

At first he had believed in Jesus, and thought He was a very wonderful man, so powerful that it would not be long before He became a king.

'And when He is King He will remember all His disciples and friends,' thought the cunning Judas, 'and I shall be among them. I shall become a prince, at least! I shall have much power and a great deal of money.'

The months went by and Judas found that Jesus was certainly not going to be the kind of king that

Judas imagined. And what was this kingdom that Jesus so often spoke of? Why, it was only a kingdom of love! It wasn't a real kingdom with palaces and soldiers and courtiers and plenty of money flowing in — it was simply a kingdom of love, to which the poorest of the land could belong.

Judas was scornful of such a kingdom. He had not given up his work to follow Jesus for that!

'This man is full of a strange power. He can work the most wonderful miracles,' thought Judas. 'Then why does He not work miracles for Himself and for us? He could so easily make us rich and strong and powerful! But He doesn't. He simply goes round talking and preaching, and healing the sick. I wish I had never followed Him!'

The traitor said nothing to the others of what he thought. Then one day he became afraid. Some of the powerful men of Jerusalem, the Chief Priests, the Scribes and the Pharisees, were making threats against Jesus. They were angry because the poor people loved Him, followed Him and believed every word He said. They were jealous and bitter.

Judas knew this. He knew that if the Chief Priests could take Jesus and throw Him into prison with His disciples, they would be glad.

'I don't want to go to prison,' thought Judas. 'I must look after myself. I will go to the Chief Priests and tell them I will help them to capture Jesus, if they will pay me. Then I shall be safe.'

Now it happened that Caiaphas, the High Priest, was calling a meeting of the rulers of Jerusalem to decide how they could take Jesus and put Him into prison.

'We will capture Him as soon as we can,' said Caiaphas. 'But not just yet. There is a great Festival in Jerusalem this week, and the town is full of people who love Jesus. We will wait till the week is over, then we will see what we can do to take this man.'

Someone came into the room where they were holding their meeting, someone who made the priests stare in amazement.

It was Judas — Judas, one of the very disciples of the man they had been talking of. What did he want?

He soon told them. 'I will help you to capture Jesus,' said Judas. 'How much will you give me if I do?'

This made things very easy for the priests. They were delighted. 'We will give you thirty pieces of silver!' said Caiaphas. 'That is the price of a slave, and is good pay for you.'

'Pay me now,' said Judas. He did not trust anyone because he was untrustworthy himself. The priests counted out thirty pieces of silver for the traitor.

'I will send you word when you can capture Jesus,' said Judas. 'I will choose a time when there are few people about to interfere.'

Then he left the meeting with the money in his bag — and with a terrible secret in his heart. 'Nobody guesses what I have done,' he thought. 'I have sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. I am rich!'

But Jesus knew what he had done, and He was grieved and sad at heart.

31

The Last Supper

It was Festival Week in Jerusalem. The sacred Feast of the Passover was being held. Jesus wanted to eat the Feast for the last time with His disciples, before He was betrayed by Judas.

'Go and prepare the Feast in a room I will tell you of,' said Jesus to Peter and John. So the two disciples went to the room that a friend had lent to Jesus for the Feast, and got it ready.

Round the table were drawn couches, for in those long-ago days people lay on couches to eat their meals and did not sit on chairs. The Feast was of bread made without yeast, roast lamb, a sauce, a bitter salad, and wine to drink. Peter and John prepared everything ready for the meal.

Some of the disciples wanted to take the chief seats at the table. Jesus saw this. Had they still not learnt that such things did not matter? How could He show them that it was wrong and foolish always to try and get the best seats, the finest food, the most attention?

Now usually at a feast there was a servant who

welcomed the guests, and brought water to wash their dirty, dusty feet. But there was no servant that night.

'I will be their servant,' thought Jesus. 'I will show them that although I am called Master by them all, I am their humble and loving servant too, as we all should be to one another.'

He took off His long cloak and wide belt, and tied a towel round His waist. He took water and poured it into a basin on the floor. And then Jesus went from one disciple to another, washing and wiping their feet.

The disciples were astonished. Peter tried to stop Jesus from washing his feet — but when Jesus said, 'He that would be chief among you shall be servant of all,' he and the others knew what Jesus meant, and they were silent.

The great Feast began. Jesus broke the bread and blessed it, and then gave it to His disciples. He said to them, 'Take ye and eat. This is my body.'

He handed them the cup of wine and said, 'Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood, which shall be shed for many.'

Then He told the disciples that He was soon to die, but that He would come again to them before He went up to His Father in Heaven.

And still we keep this Feast ourselves and call it

Jesus broke the bread and blessed it.

the Holy Communion, eating bread, drinking wine, and remembering how Jesus gave His body and His blood for all of us who welcome His kingdom of love. It is our Feast of Remembrance, our way of coming close to the Lord and Master.

32

In the Garden of Gethsemane

WHEN Jesus and His disciples had finished their supper — the last one that Jesus had with them — Judas slipped away.

The time had come for him to betray Jesus. It was dark. Judas knew that soon Jesus was going into the lonely Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. It would be a good time for the priests to send and take Him.

Jesus waited until Judas had gone. Then He gave His disciples a new commandment — the very greatest and most important of all His commandments.

'I give you a new commandment,' He said. 'Love one another.'

He did not give it only to His disciples. He gave it to us as well. It is a commandment we should never forget.

Then Jesus arose and took His disciples to the quiet Garden of Gethsemane. He left all but Peter, James and John at the gate. He wanted these three near Him, because He was very sad.

He knew that His work on earth was finished, and that soon some very terrible things would happen to Him. Judas had gone to betray Him. Jesus needed to pray and to get courage and comfort from His Heavenly Father. Although He was the Son of God He was also the Son of Man, and He felt the same things that we feel, and suffered pain and unhappiness just as we do.

'Wait here and keep awake,' He said to the three disciples, and He went a little way away to pray.

After a while He went back to His disciples, feeling lonely and unhappy. They were all asleep.

'Could you not keep awake for me one hour?' said Jesus, sadly, and once again He went to pray to God. He knew that in a very short time Judas would come with soldiers to take Him.

Jesus went to His disciples twice more — and at the third time His face was full of courage.

Jesus prayed for courage and comfort.

'Rise!' He said. 'Let us be gone. Our betrayer is here.'

Judas had been to Caiaphas. 'Go now to the Garden of Gethsemane,' he said. 'Jesus is there with His disciples. It will be easy to take Him there, in the dark of night.'

33

The Capture of Jesus

THERE came a noise at the gate, and in marched soldiers, priests, servants and the Temple Guard. They were armed with sticks and swords. They carried torches, and the flames lighted up the olive trees in the Garden.

'Judas, how shall we know which man is Jesus?' asked the priests.

'I will go to Him and kiss Him,' said Judas. 'You must watch to see which man I greet, and take Him.'

Judas went straight up to Jesus, who was standing silently beneath an olive tree.

'Hail, Master!' said Judas, and kissed Him, as was his custom.

Jesus looked at him sadly and sternly. 'Judas, do you betray me with a kiss?' He said. Then He turned to the crowd of excited men near by.

'Whom do you seek?' He asked.

'Jesus of Nazareth,' they answered.

'I am He,' said Jesus.

Peter drew his sword, ready to defend Jesus to the death. He struck out at a man near by.

'Peter, put away your sword,' commanded Jesus. He turned to the crowd once more.

'Have you come against me as if I were a thief, with sticks and swords? You laid no hand on me when I sat each day in the Temple, preaching. But now your time has come — this is your hour, and the powers of evil must have their way.'

Then the soldiers laid hands on Jesus and took Him. And all His disciples forsook Him and fled.

34

Before the Cock Crew Twice

PETER followed the soldiers and priests a good way behind. He was afraid. How terrible to see Jesus, so wonderful and so powerful in all He could do for others, being marched away like a common thief! Peter could not understand it.

Jesus had known that the bold, impulsive Peter would be afraid. At the Last Supper He had told him something that the disciple had not believed.

'Although you say you would follow me and go with me to imprisonment or death, Peter, I tell you that before the cock crows twice, you will three times deny that you know me,' He had said.

Now Peter, trembling and amazed, was full of fear as he followed the little company to the house of

Caiaphas, the High Priest. He managed to get into the big courtyard of the house, and he went to a fire to warm himself, for he was cold and miserable.

A maid-servant was there, and she knew him. 'You are one of that man's disciples, aren't you?' she said.

'Woman, I have never known Jesus,' said Peter, loudly.

Somewhere a cock crowed, for it was almost day.

Then someone else called out to Peter, 'You are one of the followers of Jesus.'

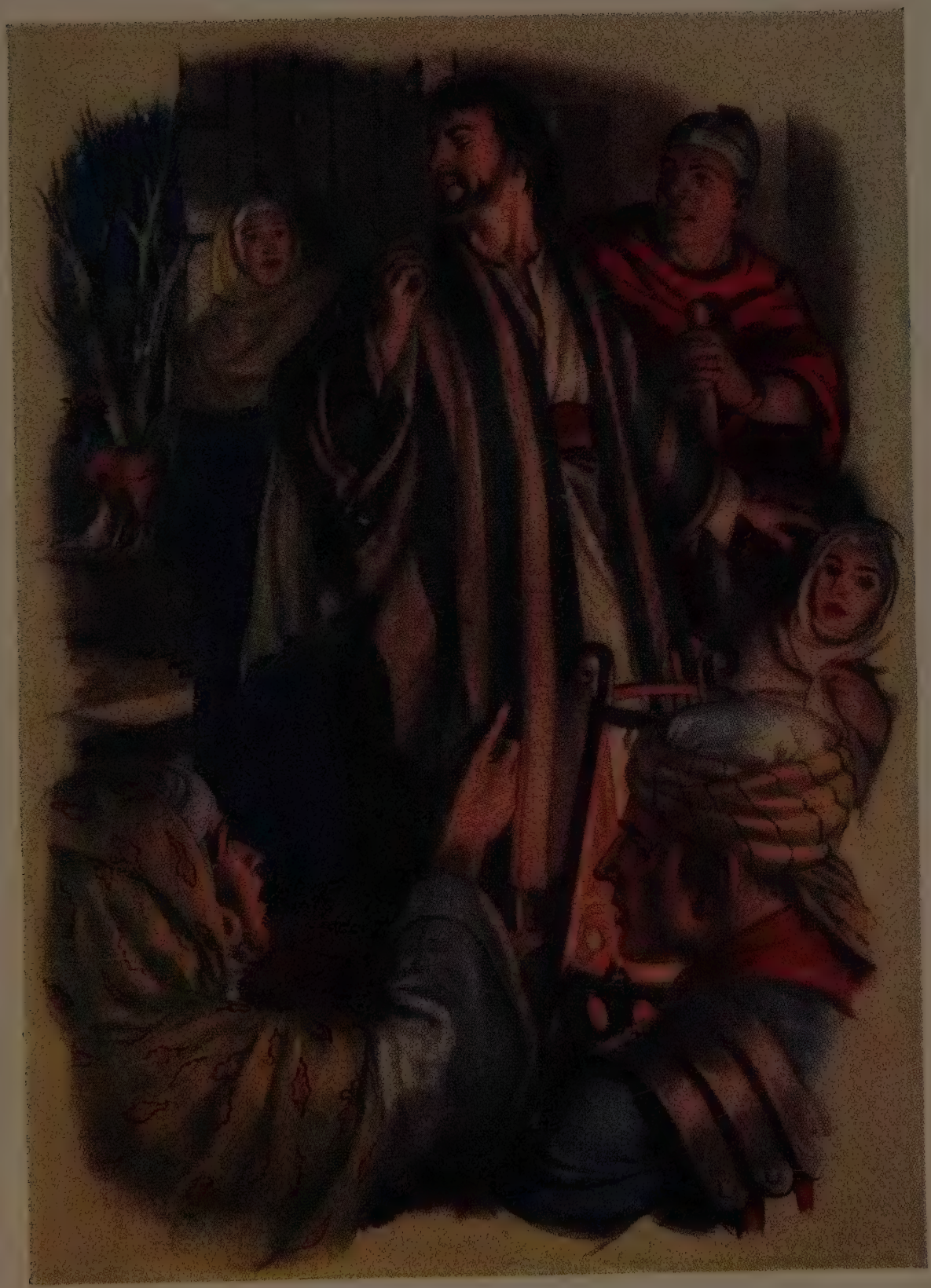
'Man, I am not,' said Peter at once.

And yet a third man said, 'Surely this man is one of Jesus' friends — hear how he speaks! He comes from Galilee, like Jesus!'

'I tell you I do not know this man!' shouted Peter, angrily.

Then the cock crowed for the second time, and Peter suddenly remembered what Jesus had said. He had said that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crowed twice. And in spite of all the brave things he had said to his beloved Master, Peter had been a coward, and had denied that he knew Him.

Poor Peter! With a breaking heart he went out of the courtyard into the street, and wept bitterly.



Then the cock crowed for the second time.

35

The Trial of Jesus

JESUS was in prison, mocked at and scorned. His disciples had left Him, and He was lonely and sad.

Caiaphas the High Priest had ordered Him to be taken to the Roman Governor, Pilate. Pilate would put Jesus to death! That was what the priests wanted — they must somehow get rid of this man whom the common people loved so much.

The Romans were rulers over the Jews. If only the Jews could think of bad things to say about Jesus, if they could say that He was planning to be a king, then Pilate would perhaps think Jesus meant to lead an army against the Roman rulers, and overthrow them to make Himself king.

'After all, Jesus has said He is king,' said the priests to one another. So He had — He had said that He was bringing them *His* kingdom of love.

'We will tell Pilate that this man sets himself up to be a king,' they decided, and so, shouting and yelling, they went to the court with Jesus and told Pilate the things they had determined to say.

Jesus said nothing. The Jews shouted continually.

Pilate decided to take the prisoner into his palace and question Him alone. So he ordered Jesus to be brought to him, and he questioned Him closely.

He soon saw that there was no harm in this grave man with the steady eyes and clear voice. He would never lead any army against the Romans!

He went out to the Chief Priests.

'I find no fault in this man!' said Pilate, meaning to set Jesus free at once. But the crowd were so angry that Pilate hardly knew what to do.

Then he remembered that Jesus came from Galilee.

Herod the King ruled over Galilee, not Pilate. He could get rid of this man by sending Him to the Jewish king, Herod. Herod was in Jerusalem every day. He could judge this man and do what he liked with Him.

So Jesus was taken away to Herod. Herod had heard about Him, and knew that He did many miracles. But Jesus did none for Herod. He stood there, silent, while everyone mocked Him, Herod too.

'You think you're a king, do you?' said Herod. 'Well, you shall be dressed as one. Fetch one of my red cloaks, and wrap it round this fellow!'

Then Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, dressed as a king, so that everyone might see Him and laugh at Him.

Pilate did not want to harm Jesus, and he certainly did not want to kill Him. He did not find any fault in Him worthy of great punishment or of death. He thought that he would set Jesus free.

But the crowd would not let him. 'Do not set Him free! Set the robber Barabbas free instead!' they cried. 'Crucify Jesus! Hang Him on a cross and let Him die!'

36

Jesus on the Cross

PILATE set the robber Barabbas free, and gave orders that Jesus was to be beaten. The soldiers were cruel and merciless to Him.

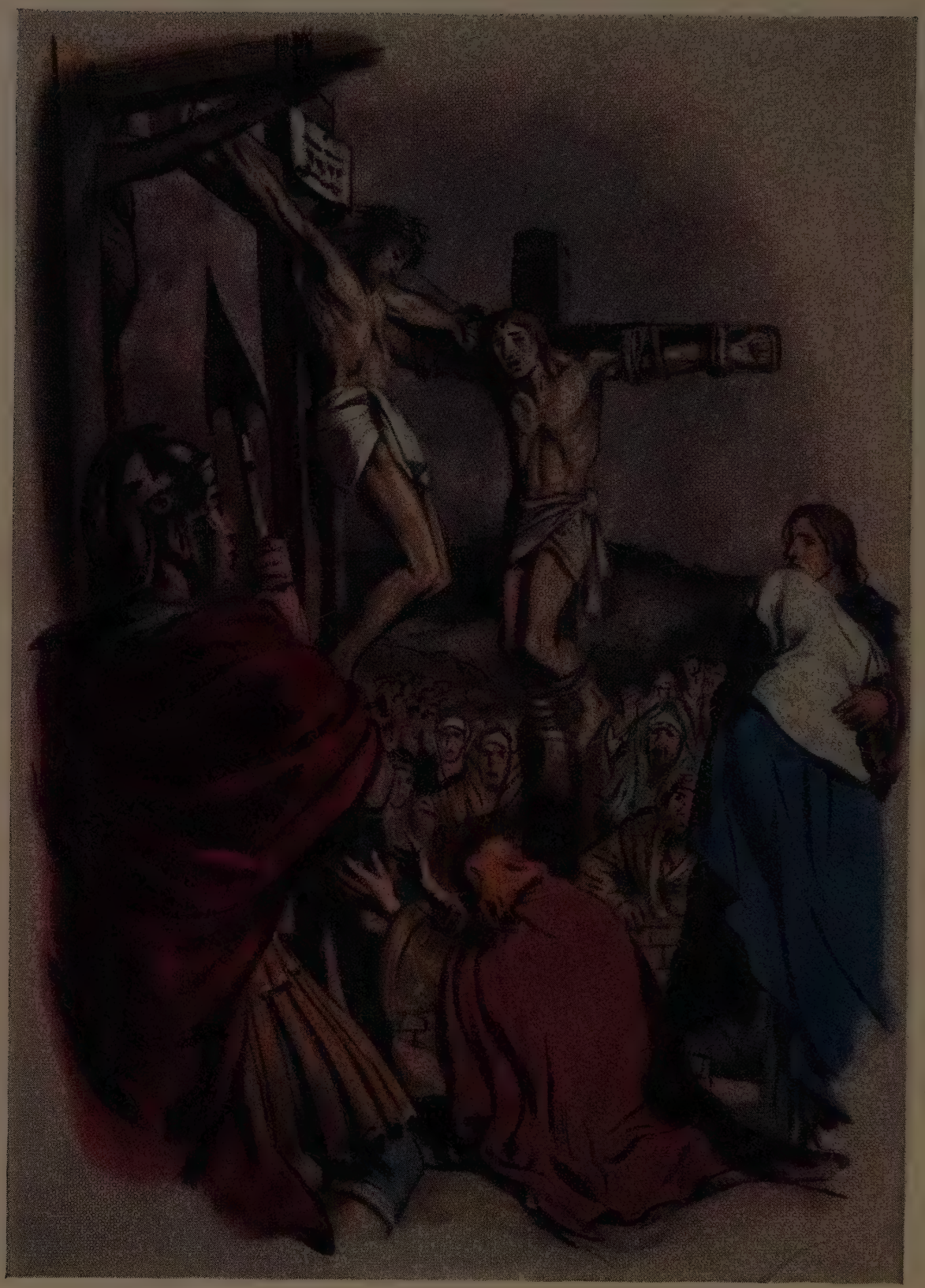
'Does this fellow call Himself King of the Jews?' they said. 'Well, we will crown Him and give Him a sceptre and a throne!'

So they gave Jesus a chair for a throne, and they made Him a crown of thorns that pricked His head, and they put a stick in His hand for a sceptre. They mocked at poor, tired Jesus and had no pity for Him.

In the prison with Jesus there were two other prisoners. They were robbers, and they too were to hang on crosses with Jesus.

Each of the prisoners had to carry his own heavy cross. Jesus had His over His shoulder, and He could hardly drag the weight along, for He was tired and had been beaten by the soldiers. He fell down, and the soldiers had to take someone from the crowd to carry His cross for Him.

The guards took the three men to a hill outside the city, called Golgotha. They fastened the men to



Jesus knew that He was about to die.

their crosses and let them hang there for all to see. People mocked at Jesus as He hung there in the hot sun, thirsty and in great pain.

'Ho! You have many a time saved others! But now you can't even save yourself!'

Some of Jesus' friends came there, and His mother Mary stood near, weeping bitterly. How could this happen to her good and noble son, at whose birth all the angels in heaven had sung?

Jesus was sad for His mother. He spoke to John, the disciple He loved most of all.

'Behold your mother!' He said. Then He spoke to His mother. 'Behold your son!'

They both knew what He meant, and from that day John looked after Mary as if she were his own mother.

Jesus was a man like other men, and He had to bear the same pain as the two robbers bore, and to feel the same great fear and unhappiness. He felt almost as if God, His Heavenly Father, had forsaken Him. It was His darkest hour.

Then He knew that He was about to die, and He cried out, 'It is finished! Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.'

Jesus of Nazareth was dead.

37

Jesus Rises Again

THERE came a man called Joseph of Arimathaea. He was a friend of Jesus, and he wanted to take Him down from the cruel cross, and put Him in a tomb in a beautiful garden.

Pilate said he might take Jesus, and Joseph wrapped the poor, ill-used body in sweet-smelling linen into which fragrant spices had been put. Then he took Jesus to the cool cave in the garden where no one had ever been buried before. He laid Jesus there, and then left the tomb sadly, rolling a heavy stone across the entrance to seal up the doorway.

Some women who loved Jesus saw where Joseph had put Him. 'Let us come here again as soon as we can,' they said to one another. 'We can do so little for Jesus now — but we can bring sweet spices to the cave and anoint Him, remembering Him with love and grief.'

So, early in the morning of the third day, these women set out for the garden where the tomb of Jesus was.

'I know where the cave is,' said one woman.

'There is a big stone outside to seal up the doorway.'

'Shall we be able to move the stone?' said the other women, in dismay. They entered the garden and went to the tomb.

There was no stone in front of the cave! Someone had moved it. The women were full of astonishment, and they went fearfully inside the cave.

The body of Jesus was gone — but there, sitting in the tomb, was what they thought was a young man, dressed in a long and dazzling white robe.

All the women looked at him in fear and wonder. Who was this beautiful young man? Where was the body of Jesus?

The young man saw their fear. 'Do not be afraid!' he said. 'Are you looking for Jesus of Nazareth, He

who was crucified? He is risen. He is no longer here. See, here is the place where His body lay.'

The women trembled, thinking this young man, so strange and dazzling, was surely an angel. He spoke again.

'Go on your way,' he said. 'Go to the disciples of Jesus, and tell them that Jesus will go before them into Galilee, and that they will see Him there.'

The women could not say a word. They fled away from the cool dark cave, which was so strangely lighted by the angel, and hurried out of the garden.

'Jesus has risen from the dead! Can it be true?' they said. 'Was that an angel? He looked like one. What strange words he spoke! Jesus is gone from there, that is plain. Where is He? Has He come to life again?'

They went to the disciples, who had all hidden themselves away in Jerusalem, afraid that they might be caught and punished too. They were frightened, puzzled and unhappy. How could their beloved Master have died such a terrible death? Was He not the Son of God?

The women came to them, panting out what they had seen and heard. 'Jesus has risen again!'

The disciples were full of the utmost amazement

and gladness. Could this really be true? Peter and John could not wait for a moment. They ran off to the tomb in the garden as swiftly as they could.

John got there first. He stooped down and looked into the tomb. The angel was no longer there. The body of Jesus was not to be seen. Only the grave-clothes were there, the garments in which Joseph of Arimathaea had so lovingly wrapped the dead Jesus. They were neatly folded in a pile.

'See, Peter,' said John. 'The women spoke the truth. Jesus has gone. He has risen again! This is glorious news.'

They both went into the tomb, marvelling. 'We must go back and tell the others,' said Peter. 'Did not our Master say that He would rise again in three days' time? This is the third day — and He has in truth arisen!'

'If only we could see Jesus!' said John, longingly. 'I would so much like to see our dear Lord again.'

38

What Happened to Mary Magdalene

ONE of the women who had fetched the disciples to the tomb was Mary Magdalene. She had loved Jesus very much, and when the disciples had gone, she stood weeping by the tomb. As she wept, she bent down and looked again into the cave. She now saw two angels there, one sitting where the head of Jesus had lain and the other where His feet had been. They spoke to her gently. 'Why do you weep?' they said.

'I weep because they have taken away the body of my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him,' said Mary sorrowfully.

She suddenly felt that someone else was near by and she turned to find out who it was, blinded by her tears. It must be the gardener. He would know where the body of Jesus was.

'Why do you weep?' said a tender voice. 'Whom are you looking for?'

'Oh, sir!' cried Mary, weeping still more bitterly, 'sir, if you have taken my Lord somewhere, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.'

And then the man who Mary thought was the

Mary saw two angels there . . .

gardener said one word to her in such a familiar, loving voice that she knew who He was at once.

'Mary!' He said.

Mary looked up at Him, crying out joyfully, her eyes suddenly full of happiness.

'My Master!'

She knew that it was Jesus who had come to her, and she fell on her knees to worship Him, a great gladness in her heart.

39

The End of the Story

For forty days Jesus stayed on our earth. He went to His friends and to His disciples, making them happy, and telling them what they must do.

They must spread His kingdom of love, they must tell everyone the good news, they must teach, they must help the weak and the poor — they must carry on the work He had begun.

'You are the beginnings of my Church,' He said. They were the first Christians, the first of the many many millions who were to come.

And then, after forty days, Jesus came to the disciples no more. 'He has ascended to Heaven in a cloud of glory,' they said. 'But yet He is here with us still, in our hearts and minds, helping us just as He did when He was alive.'

He is here with us too, always ready to help and to comfort. He came down to this world to be one of us and to show us how to be good and loving, the most wonderful man the world has ever seen.

Echoing down the centuries that have passed since Jesus was born, nearly two thousand years ago, still comes His greatest commandment to us and to all men :

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

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